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A STAR FOR A NIGHT

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JANIS

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A STAR FOR A NIGHT











ELSIE JANIS IN A FEW OF HER CHARACTERIZATIONS.

A STAR FOR A NIGHT

A STORY OF STAGE LIFE

BY
ELSIE JANIS

WITH PICTURES FROM THE PLAY
TAKEN ESPECIALLY FOR THE BOOK



NEW YORK
WILLIAM RICKEY & COMPANY
1911

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To My Mother

ORIGINAL CAST
OF
A STAR FOR A NIGHT

*Produced at Charles Dillingham's Globe Theatre,
New York*

"MARKY" ZINSHEIMER		<i>Mr. Joseph Cawthorn</i>
MRS. BLACKMAN	{ Guests at the Claypool Hotel }	<i>Miss Jane Bliss</i>
MRS. GILDAY		<i>Miss Pauline Hathaway</i>
MRS. MARTIN		<i>Miss Josephine Lachmar</i>
MRS. CARLIN		<i>Miss Henrietta Pouts</i>
BELL-BOY		<i>Mr. Al Stuart</i>
MRS. DANTON		<i>Miss Harriet Sterling</i>
VICTOR WELDON		<i>Mr. Ralph Nairn</i>
SANFORD GORDON		<i>Mr. Stanley H. Forde</i>
FELICE	{ Mrs. Dainton's servants }	<i>Miss Josephine Kernell</i>
MURRAY		<i>Mr. Jack Sullivan</i>
FLOSSIE FORSYTHE		<i>Miss Elizabeth Brice</i>
MRS. KILPATRICK		<i>Miss Margaret King</i>
MARTHA FARNUM		<i>Miss Elsie Janis</i>
"PINKIE" LEXINGTON		<i>Miss Julia Frary</i>
GEORGE CLAYTON		<i>Mr. Wallace McCutcheon</i>
LIZZIE		<i>Miss Olive Quimby</i>
ARTHUR MORTIMER		<i>Mr. Gene Revere</i>
MRS. JANE ANDERSON		<i>Miss Queenie Vassar</i>
MESSINGER BOY		<i>Master Albert Lamson</i>
ARNOLD LAWRENCE		<i>Mr. Charles Judels</i>
PHIL HUMMER		<i>Mr. Charles King</i>

<i>Business Manager</i>	J. CLYDE RIGBY
<i>Stage Manager</i>	E. C. DONNELLY

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CHAPTER I

“ZINSHEIMER, OF NEW YORK”

STICK a pin in the map of southern Indiana, half an inch to the left of Lost River, and about six hours from the rest of the world, as time is used to measure railroad journeys, and you will find a speck called French Lick Springs. Hidden away in the hills, so remote from the centers of civilization that only wealthy inebriates and chronic invalids can afford to visit this out of the way, yet expensive, spot, French Lick has other attractions than the natural beauties of its scenery and the health-giving quality of its waters. For while the sick and the ailing may be

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tempted to the Springs in the hope of gaining health from the bad-smelling waters they drink, and dozens of florid-faced men invade the little town almost every day from the big and distant cities in order to "get washed out" after too much indulgence in alcoholic stimulants, there are others who go to the Springs simply for the excitement of a little whirl at the gaming tables, which rumor says abound there, but which a shrewd deputy sheriff invariably reports to the local grand jury, "*Non est.*"

The town itself is a tiny hamlet. There is a post-office, a railroad station, a few frame buildings, and the hotel—the hotel, because it is the only shelter the town affords to the weary traveler. Patrons who have stopped at the City Hotel in Marshalltown, Iowa, or the Commercial House in Joplin, Missouri, may wonder how such a tiny town supports such a gigantic hotel, but the rural spectators at the railroad station, who have seen the trains

"Zinsheimer, of New York"

on the little branch road bring in Pullman after Pullman loaded to the roofs, know that no small part of the great outside world comes here for rest, recreation, and rehabilitation. Drinking is under the ban here—that is, if you must drink, you must drink the sulphur water. And every one who has tried to mix alcohol with the water of the Springs knows the evil consequences thereof.

Which latter explains why Mr. "Marky" Zinsheimer, New York, feather importer, was particularly grouchy on a certain autumn afternoon when he strolled into the sun parlor on the veranda of the French Lick Springs Hotel. In the vicinity of Broadway and Canal Street, New York, Mr. Zinsheimer was a personage of great importance. Not a cloak model in the Grand Street district but knew him to be "a perfectly lovely gentleman." Not a chorus girl south of Fifty-ninth Street but knew that "Marky" was always a friend in need and a friend indeed. The

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waiters at Rector's treated him almost as if he were an equal. He was always sure of a prominent table at the Café de l'Opera, whether he wore evening clothes or not. He was accustomed to attention, and demanded it. Furthermore, he was willing to pay for all the attention he received. Forty-two years old, with a blond German personality which manifested itself in a slightly bald forehead, slightly curled blond hair, and a slightly blond moustache, Mr. "Marky" Zinsheimer gave every outward evidence of being an important personage. His clothes were, perhaps, a trifle extreme; his tie perhaps a trifle too pronounced in color; his watch-chain a trifle too heavy; and his solitaire diamond stud was undoubtedly too large; yet for all that, if you were in the least bit worldly, "Marky" Zinsheimer was not a person to be lightly ignored.

Mr. Zinsheimer's natural good humor was disturbed even before he made his entrance into the sun parlor. In the first



“MARKY” ZINSHEIMER (JOSEPH CAWTHORN)

"Zinsheimer, of New York"

place, he had gone seven days without a drink, a feat simple enough for a camel, but slightly difficult for a Zinsheimer. In the second place, he had devised a scheme for entertainment during his enforced vacation at the Springs, said entertainment comprising a visit and the companionship at golf of one Miss Flossie Forsythe, of the "Follies" company, who had hurriedly left the company in Chicago to accept Mr. Zinsheimer's telegraphed invitation. But, while Mr. Zinsheimer was genuinely fond of Flossie, and had even once spoken vaguely of matrimony, he had found that a week of her society at breakfast, dinner and supper, to say nothing of golf, was a trifle wearing.

The third reason for Mr. Zinsheimer's perturbation was the discovery, as he entered the sun parlor, that all the desirable chairs were occupied.

Two of the easy wicker rockers were drawn up by a small table, where a game of checkers was in progress between two

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fat ladies. Ranged at intervals along the glass-enclosed front were four other equally stout ladies, lolling back in equally comfortable chairs, some reading, some dozing. Mr. Zinsheimer, who had anticipated a pleasant morning reading the New York papers, was obviously annoyed. Fortunately, he knew the proper method of attacking and routing the enemy.

One of the stout ladies, puzzling over her next move, was almost choked when a whiff of smoke was blown across the checker-board. A moment later, a somnolent and rotund lady in one of the rockers started up furiously as another whiff drifted in her direction. A page-boy entering at this particular moment was hurriedly summoned by the indignant ladies, and Mr. Zinsheimer, gazing vacantly into space, felt a slight touch on the arm.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the boy, "smoking is not permitted here."

Mr. Zinsheimer frowned.

"I did not ask permission," he replied.

"Zinsheimer, of New York"

Two of the stout ladies gathered up their magazines, glowered at the placid Zinsheimer and the nonplussed boy, murmured "Wretch," and departed.

"But I mean, there's no smoking here," continued the boy.

"Marky" Zinsheimer blew a particularly large whiff of smoke in the direction of the checker-table.

"You're wrong, kid," he remarked. "There *is* smoking here, and I'm doing it."

"But it's against the hotel rules."

"Hotel rules are like a woman's mind," said "Marky" carelessly, moving toward the checker-table. "They can be changed to fit any situation."

The checker-players were so much absorbed in their game that they did not notice him at first, so he leaned over the table, genially, and inquired:

"Well, whose move is it now?"

"I believe it's mine," retorted one of the two players, indignantly rising to her feet and starting toward the door.

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"And mine," responded the other, following suit. At the door the twain paused and called to the other occupant of the room: "We are going for a walk, Mabel. Won't you come?"

Mabel picked up her book and moved toward the irate checker-players who had been so summarily routed.

"I don't like that cigar," she declared, stopping and turning to Zinsheimer.

"Well, then, try one of these," responded the irrepressible "Marky," offering several long perfectos from a leather case. He was answered only by a snort of indignation, and the next moment the smiling and courteous Mr. Zinsheimer, alone on the field of battle, settled himself in the most comfortable of the vacated chairs.

But "Marky's" serenity was to be short-lived. There was a rattle of chatelaine chains, a vague and indistinct odor of some unrecognizable but vivid perfume, the rustle of silken skirts, a cry of glad sur-

"Zinsheimer, of New York"

prise, and Miss Flossie Forsythe, engaging, attractive, youthful and magnetic, settled herself on the arm of his rocking-chair as though entitled to rest there by the law of eminent domain.

"Marky," she cried, "I've been looking for you everywhere! Who ever would have thought of finding you in the sun parlor?"

Mr. Zinsheimer coughed uneasily.

"Yes, that's just what I thought," he stammered. "You see," he added, "I noticed you talking to that swell chap Gordon in the lobby, and I didn't like it."

Flossie patted his cheek playfully, in spite of "Marky's" efforts to elude her, and said joyfully:

"Oh, Marky, you were jealous!"

Mr. Zinsheimer grunted.

"Well, if you want to find a new backer, go ahead. All right, only you'd better be careful I don't get cold feet first. Feather importers is in demand on Broadway this season," he added as an afterthought.

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"But Mr. Gordon is an old friend," pouted Flossie. "I was introduced to him one night when he sat at a table next to me during the run of 'Florodora.'"

"I suppose you were one of them original sextetters, eh?"

"Now, Marky, don't be horrid when I was just going to ask a little favor of you."

Mr. Zinsheimer rose to his feet carefully, and buttoned up his coat with an ominous air, while, relieved of his ballast, Flossie almost fell from her comfortable perch on the arm of the big chair.

"Nothing doing, Flossie," remarked Zinsheimer, coldly. "Of course it's all right for me to pay the hotel bill of my fiancée, but as the bill is assuming generous proportions, I don't think the fiancée should expect to go any further."

Flossie's dark eyes half filled with tears, and there was just a slight suspicion of a twitch around the lips at the injustice done her, and she said plaintively:

"Zinsheimer, of New York"

"Oh, I don't want to borrow any money."

At that Zinsheimer threw open his coat easily, sighed with relief, and inquired easily:

"Why, certainly, my dear. What is it you want?"

"Well, it's about my chum, Pinkie Lexington," began Flossie, brushing a few specks of dust from Mr. Zinsheimer's coat-sleeve. "We were out together two years ago with 'The Girl from Paris'—the time it stranded in Butte and you sent us the railroad tickets to come home."

"I remember," interrupted Zinsheimer, quickly. "Rather a pretty girl she was, too."

"She's still pretty, but she's awful fat," resumed Flossie, wonderfully innocently. "And I never heard any one call her beautiful. Anyhow, the show she's with has gone on the rocks up near Indianapolis, and Pinkie has been left high and dry without a cent."

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"So you want me to send her some more rocks, eh?"

"Not at all. Pinkie wrote me all about it, and I wired her to come down here at once. She's due this afternoon, and I can share my room with her if you'll just speak to the manager and say we're good for the money."

Zinsheimer scratched his head reflectively.

"But neither of you has any money," he ventured.

"You know as soon as my lawsuit is settled, I will be on velvet," retorted Flossie, haughtily. "Meanwhile, your word with the manager goes."

"Lawsuit?" repeated Mr. Zinsheimer. "Now, Flossie, that's been going on for five years and I never found out yet what it was all about. Where is it and when will it be settled?"

Flossie's evident embarrassment at the inquiry into the facts of her lawsuit was fortunately terminated by the sudden en-

"Zinsheimer, of New York"

trance of a bell-boy with a telegram for "Miss Forsythe."

"That's me, boy," cried Flossie, grabbing the envelope and tearing it open. "It's from Pinkie and she'll be here on the 3:30 train," she explained, turning to Zinsheimer. "Boy, call me a carriage."

"Yes, Miss," responded the boy, moving toward the office.

"And have it charged to my room," called Flossie, hastily. Then, taking "Marky" by the coat lapels, she turned her big brown eyes upward and asked archly:

"You will speak to the manager about Pinkie?"

Mr. Zinsheimer endeavored to gain time, but the appeal was direct and to the point. He coughed twice, as if planning resistance, and then surrendered.

"All right," he growled. "I'll speak to the manager, Flossie, but I know who'll pay the bill."

"You old dear," cried Flossie, and in

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another moment the rattling chatelaines, the vague and unrecognizable perfume, the rustling skirts and the fascinating Flossie flitted along the veranda toward the waiting carriage, while "Marky" tried to get interested in the New York papers and figure the total of seventeen days at five dollars a day, with extras in the shape of flowers, carriages, candies, manicures, tips, and other incidentals dear to the heart of a lovely woman who lives economically but well.

CHAPTER II

THE ENGLISH ACTRESS

MRS. DANTON, the great English actress, had the artistic temperament. Mrs. Danton had nerves. Mrs. Danton had many other things which an imported foreign star anxious to create a sensation might be expected to have. For instance, she had Fuzzy-Wuzzy, the petite Pomeranian poodle which never left her night or day. She had her personal manager, Victor Weldon, to act as valet for the dog by daytime, and attend to occasional business details. There were also two maids—Lizette, the French maid, whose duties were of a personal nature at hotels; and Johanna, the German maid, who assisted at the theater. Furthermore, there was a

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footman whose special province it was to precede Mrs. Dainton at all times and make sure that no rude persons caused her the slightest annoyance. In the trail of this imposing procession, as a rule, could be found Sanford Gordon.

Once Mrs. Dainton had been a great beauty. The daughter of an obscure country curate in her native England, conditions made it necessary for her to support herself. Naturally, as so many of her sex have done, she gravitated toward the stage, which always beckons most alluringly to those who have beauty, youth and talent. Too often it is but the Lorelei by which are wrecked the disappointed hopes of those not fitted by nature or temperament for the hardships that must be encountered, but with Mrs. Dainton the struggle for success had been aided materially by the beauty and charm with which she was richly endowed. Returning to America after a number of years—for her first tour of this country after her Lon-

The English Actress

don triumphs had been like a whirlwind—Mrs. Dainton had found herself still viewed with interest, still admired for the great beauty which had now reached its maturity, and still peevish and petulant as a result of the fulfillment of her every slightest wish and whim. Her little eccentricities were always excused by her personal manager as “Madame’s temperament.” If an inquisitive newspaper man wanted to know why Madame had held the curtain until nine o’clock—when in reality she had merely motored into the country too far and had been careless of the time—Victor would explain: “Ah, Madame has been visiting some sick children. She is always so generous, so considerate.” Long experience had made Victor invaluable. His it was to receive the blame whenever anything went wrong, to excuse to the utmost the weaknesses of the English actress whenever, as they often did, her whims seemed likely to affect the box-office receipts.

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Consequently, when Mrs. Dainton and her entourage, passing out on their way to Sanford Gordon's new ninety horse-power touring car which was drawn up before the hotel, entered the sun parlor, it didn't in the least surprise the amiable and considerate Victor to have the English actress pause, sniff, stamp her foot, and protest.

"Some one has been smoking here," she insisted shrilly. "Victor, send for the manager! The same thing happened yesterday."

"I have already complained once—" began Weldon, shifting the Pomeranian from the left arm to the right.

"No matter—complain again. If we cannot have satisfaction, complain a third and a fourth time. That is what hotel managers are here for—to listen to complaints."

Sanford Gordon, the least obtrusive figure of the little cavalcade, and the one who, for personal reasons, least desired a scene which might find its way into the

The English Actress

newspapers, stepped forward to calm the irate actress. Once, rumor said, Sanford Gordon had been able to calm her impetuous spirit, but that had been in days long gone by. Then he had chartered a private car to be near her on her travels, he had risked an open scandal by his devotion to the celebrated beauty. Now things were different. Not only did he not relish the idea of an altercation with a hotel management, always fraught with sensational newspaper possibilities which his smart fellow club members in New York might turn into a jibe or a joke, but his influence with Mrs. Dainton herself seemed to be waning.

"Really, my dear Mrs. Dainton," he began softly, "what does it matter? We do not intend to remain here more than a moment."

Perhaps for some hidden reason of her own, Mrs. Dainton seemed to find pleasure in turning upon him suddenly.

"How do you know how long I may

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stay here? Perhaps I may wish to spend the afternoon here," she declared. "Some one has been smoking here, smoking vile, filthy cigars. Such things affect my voice. And what could I do without my voice? I couldn't act. I should be penniless. Victor, you must not let this happen again."

"I will do my best, Mrs. Dainton," replied Victor.

"Marky" Zinsheimer, covertly throwing away his cigar, rose and bowed before the English actress, while the footman stared in surprise, and Victor seemed aghast at the presumption.

"I beg pardon, Mrs. Dainton, it was I who smoked," said "Marky."

Mrs. Dainton surveyed him curiously through her lorgnette.

"Indeed! You should have known better. I really think you had better complain to the manager, Victor, about this person."

"My name is Zinsheimer," bowed "Marky," smiling amiably. "Well-known

The English Actress

first-nighter in New York—go to all the theaters—maybe you've heard of me. I'm known everywhere along Broadway. Perhaps you may remember I bought the first box for your opening night last season. Yes, paid three hundred dollars for it, too," he added proudly, as an afterthought.

"Really?" repeated Mrs. Dainton, languidly. "Such things do not interest me in the least. I never think of the sordid details of business—I live only for my art."

She passed him by as though he were merely a part of the furniture. "Marky" gazed at her furtively, but slowly his composure deserted him. He backed away carefully from this wonderful creation.

"She lives only for her art, eh?" he murmured softly. "I got you—you'll die young," he added to himself, as he drew another cigar from his pocket, ostentatiously lighted it, and strolled out onto the veranda.

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"Victor, is the motor here?" demanded Mrs. Dainton.

Victor shifted the Pomeranian to the other arm, stepped to the door of the sun parlor, and reported that the chauffeur seemed to be tinkering with the car.

"And must I breathe this horrible atmosphere while that lazy chauffeur pretends to fix the car? You must discharge him and get another."

"But I say," broke in Gordon, "the man's the best driver I ever had. I brought him from France."

"I don't care if you brought him from Hindoostan," retorted Mrs. Dainton, coldly. "When I say I will not use him after to-day, I mean it." Reaching two daintily gloved hands toward the Pomeranian, snugly ensconced under Victor's arm, the actress grasped its little, fuzzy head, pressed it to her cheek, and smothered it with kisses. "And my poor 'ittle Fuzzy-Wuzzy. Must 'oo breafe ze awful smoke, too, bress ums baby heartsums. Ums

The English Actress

'ittle Fuzzy-Wuzzy is mamma's pet, isn't ums?"

"The motor is ready now, Madame," ventured Victor stolidly.

Mrs. Dainton handed the dog to Johanna.

"Wrap the precious darling up warmly, Johanna," she said. "You ride with me, Victor. Lizette, my cloak. Crawley, you ride in front with the chauffeur and keep any dust from entering Fuzzy's eyes."

As the procession started toward the waiting car, Gordon, who followed close by the English actress, inquired:

"Where shall we go to-day?"

"Really, I don't think we shall have room for you to-day, Sanford," said Mrs. Dainton, somewhat coldly, pausing at the top of the steps while the maids, assisted by the footman and Victor, helped Fuzzy-Wuzzy tenderly into the car.

"That's what you have said for the past three days," Gordon cried tensely. "And yet I brought my own machine and my

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own chauffeur out here from New York just to please you."

"And you are pleasing me a great deal, Sanford, by letting me go alone."

"Will nothing I do ever move you?" inquired Gordon. Then, as he saw she was more interested in the way Johanna was holding the Pomeranian, he added fiercely: "Once you would have answered differently."

Mrs. Dainton turned on him, her manner a strange mingling of sadness and regret.

"Ah, yes, once," she said softly. "I loved you then without any thought of the future, and I have paid for it with many, many bitter years of repentance. Now, after all these years—years when you seemed to have forgotten my very existence and the thing which you had once called love—I return to America, praised and honored by those who in the old days had treated me so lightly, you among the rest."

The English Actress

"That's not true," broke in Gordon. "I always loved you."

"But we parted," continued Mrs. Dainton, bitterly. "And if I had returned, needing your help instead of being able to reject all that you can give, would you have come to me again?"

"You know I should have."

"No, Sanford, we seek only that which is beyond our reach," she said softly, laying her hand on his arm. "The candle has burned out. Do not try to relight it. I have been only an incident in your life—"

"That's not true."

"Don't you suppose I know about the others?"

"They were nothing to me. It was you, always you."

"One who has been through the mill doesn't care to be crushed by the mill-stones a second time. Take my advice, Sanford—return to New York, seek out some nice young girl, and marry her."

"Never!"

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"Really!" Mrs. Dainton laughed lightly as she ran down the steps and was helped into the car by the vigilant Victor. "Tata, Sanford, I'll see you to-morrow, or the day after." And in another moment the big, red touring-car had whirled away, leaving upon the steps the solitary figure of a tall, dark, good-looking chap of uncertain age, who clenched his hands tightly, then turned suddenly as a bell-boy passed along the veranda.

"Boy!"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell my valet to pack up at once. I'm leaving for New York to-night."

"Yes, sir. Very good, sir," closing a responsive palm. "Thank you, sir."

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCING MARTHA FARNUM

IN the cosmopolitan atmosphere of any famous health resort, strangely contrasting types are often found. Amid the vain, the foolish, the inebriates and the idle who flocked to the Springs for amusement and diversion, there were a few who really came to seek health. For three months, the gay passers-by on the shaded walks near the hotel had noticed one such, an elderly lady, feeble, gray-haired, evidently recovering from a severe illness, who invariably occupied a wheel-chair, the motive power for which was furnished by a most attractive young girl always clad in simple black. The girl was about nineteen, slender, graceful, with the clear and

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partly sunburnt complexion which comes from life spent much in the open air. Her eyes and hair were brown—her eyes large and wistful, her hair light and wavy. She wore no jewelry, and there was no suggestion of color about her costume. Yet there seemed a certain lightness and gaiety in her face which conveyed the impression that sadness was not a component factor in her life. She smiled as, hour after hour, she read to the invalid on the veranda, and seemed actually to enjoy her task of wheeling the chair back and forth to the Springs in the rear of the hotel.

Once, when a traveling man who had strayed down to the Springs for a weekend offered the front clerk a cheap cigar and expressed curiosity as to the name of the young lady, that obliging encyclopedia explained:

“Oh, that’s Miss Farnum. She’s old Mrs. Kilpatrick’s companion. No, not a nurse—sort of poor relative, I guess.”

Whereupon the aforesaid traveling



“OH, THAT’S MISS FARNUM. SHE’S OLD
MRS. KILPATRICK’S COMPANION.”

Introducing Martha Farnum

gentleman, disappointed at the obvious impossibility of a chance to speak to Miss Farnum, whistled and said:

"Anyhow, she's deuced pretty. I'd like to see her wearing a real gown."

Martha's constant adherence to simple black gowns, however, was due to two reasons. She wanted every one to know that she was there simply as a companion: it saved her the necessity of pretending, for other girls of her own age, guests of the hotel, made no advances of a social nature which would have required reciprocity. Additionally, and even more important, black was inexpensive and durable.

For three months, now, Martha Farnum had been the companion of Mrs. Kilpatrick, a wealthy invalid from Marion, a small town near Indianapolis. Mrs. Kilpatrick was suffering from sciatic rheumatism, and her physician had recommended a stay at the Springs. To her objection that both her sons were too busy to accompany her, and that she knew no one

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else who could act as a companion, the doctor had replied:

"I know a person who will be ideal. Her name is Farnum; she's the daughter of an old friend of mine who has been in hard luck for three years. Lives on a farm near here. Martha is the eldest girl in a family of seven, and I know she'll jump at the chance. You'll find her modest, well-bred and well-educated, with just two faults"—he smiled at Mrs. Kilpatrick's hesitation—"she's very pretty and very poor."

Martha had been sent for, the arrangements made, and she found herself for the first time in her life living at a real hotel, with all her expenses paid and thirty-five dollars a month besides. Her duties were not arduous, for the hotel servants attended to most of Mrs. Kilpatrick's wants. She, however, read to the invalid, talked, laughed, sang, pushed the chair around the beautiful walks, and dined with her.

Introducing Martha Farnum

Every afternoon, while Mrs. Kilpatrick took a nap, Martha was free.

At first the hotel life dazzled her. It almost stunned her. The transition from life on their humble farm, with all its privations and discomforts, to what seemed to her a fairyland of lights, music, beautiful gowns and jewels, and the wasteful extravagance and display of wealth, seemed unreal and impossible. Back on the farm, as the eldest of a family of seven, she had worked, endured—and hoped. But in her wildest dreams she had never imagined such a beautiful escape. No one at home had had the imagination to understand her. No one, unless perhaps her father, had even sympathized with her in her dismay, when the panic three years before had forced the little town bank to close, and a hail-storm that same summer ruined their crops. For before that they had intended to send her away to boarding-school at Logansport; she had even passed her entrance examinations. Then, all that

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had to be forgotten in the poverty that had followed.

Now, for the first time, Martha was seeing *life*. It was new to her; it frightened her, but still she was learning to love it.

Mrs. Kilpatrick had been kind, and had grown to be genuinely fond of her. Thus it was with a touch of sadness that she stopped Martha pushing the chair up and down the veranda this same autumn afternoon, and mentioned a subject which she had persistently ignored for three days.

"Martha, dear, let me speak with you," said Mrs. Kilpatrick, suddenly. "Bring up your chair," she added.

"The doctor has told me," continued Mrs. Kilpatrick, "that he thinks a sea voyage will be beneficial. He suggests that I spend the coming winter in some warm climate, preferably Italy, and I have decided to do so."

Although uncertain as to just how it affected her, Martha could not restrain

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her pleasure and excitement at the possible thought of going. She clasped her hands convulsively, her eyes lighted up with anticipation, and she cried gladly:

"Lovely! And am I to go, too?"

Mrs. Kilpatrick shook her head. "My dear child," she said sadly, "I am sorry, but I shall be unable to take you. My sister, who is in New York, is to accompany me," she explained. "I'm afraid I shall have to let you return home this week. Unless," she added, "you can get something else to do."

"I must. I will. To return home now would be to admit defeat. I'll never do that. And we're all so dreadfully poor. I haven't any right to impose myself on them, now that I've commenced to earn my own living."

"Perhaps the doctor can suggest another position for you, child," said Mrs. Kilpatrick.

"Perhaps. Anyway, I must make my own living," declared Martha, with conviction.

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tion. "Other girls are doing it; I ought to be able to. I'll go to New York or Chicago or some other big city, and I'll work at—at something or other," she concluded, rather lamely.

Mrs. Kilpatrick smiled indulgently at her earnestness.

"That's the proper spirit, my child," she said. "I'm sure something will turn up."

Martha gazed out through the trees, for at that moment the lumbering old stage-coach came driving up from the little railroad station at the foot of the hill, with a part of several carloads of visitors who had come on the afternoon train from the North. She was still thinking rather dismally of this sudden change in her future when a bell-boy brought a card to Mrs. Kilpatrick.

"I forgot to tell you, Martha," broke in the latter, glancing at the card. "I was expecting a Mr. Clayton from New York. He is a well-known collector of curios and

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is coming 'way out here very largely to look at my collection of scarabs. I feel a little tired now. Won't you see him for me, Martha, and show him the collection?"

"Of course, Mrs. Kilpatrick."

"Show Mr. Clayton here, please," she said to the boy, "and ask him to wait." Then, as the boy departed, the invalid turned wearily to Martha: "Take me to my room now, dear, then you can come back with the scarabs."

George Clayton's thirty-three years sat lightly upon his shoulders, though a close observer would have noticed that his clean-shaven face was tanned a trifle more than one would expect, and one might likewise have expressed surprise to find a slight suggestion of gray around the edges of his slightly curly hair. The athletic build of his shoulders and the erect bearing indicated that, while he might not be "the hope of the white race" from a pugilistic

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standpoint, he was amply able to take care of himself in any emergency.

Clayton's visit to the Springs was two-fold. He needed a rest, for in the course of a law practice which had developed amazingly in the past seven years, he had overworked. The only recreations he had enjoyed had been temporary, the persistent pursuit of a number of fads. Though not wealthy, his unusual success at law had produced an income more than sufficient for his needs, and the surplus had been used from time to time in developing the latter. Just now one of these happened to be Egyptian scarabs, and the well-known collection of Mrs. Kilpatrick having been called to his attention, he had decided to take a vacation and look at them.

"Are you Mr. Clayton?"

A slender, girlish figure, clasping a large leather case, stood before him, and, as he smiled an assent and bowed, extended her hand in cordial greeting.

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"Pardon me—I expected to see Mrs. Kilpatrick," said Clayton.

"I am sorry to say she is not well," said Martha. "I am her companion, Miss Farnum."

Clayton bowed again and murmured something unintelligible.

"Mrs. Kilpatrick asked me to show you the scarabs. Afterwards you can tell her what you think of them."

"I shall be glad to do so. I shall probably envy them."

"Mrs. Kilpatrick tells me you are quite a collector."

"Yes," answered Clayton, slowly. "I have collected almost everything in my time, except money."

"It must be interesting," said Martha naïvely, sitting in one of the easy rockers and opening the case, while Clayton drew his chair alongside.

"First it was postage stamps," explained Clayton, picking up one of the queer little beetles and examining it intently. "But

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postage stamps soon proved tiresome. Then came Indian relics, but they lost favor when I took up antique weapons of war. Then I went in for emeralds and jewels, but they proved too expensive. I think I have had twenty fads in the last ten years."

"But your business—hasn't that suffered?" Martha smiled.

"Not a particle. I've had a glorious time, and my clients who knew of my fads thought all the more of me because they fancied I must be a brainy chap to have them." He laughed.

"It must be wonderful to do as one pleases," mused Martha, gazing out among the trees.

Clayton laughed again.

"Even that gets tiresome," he said. "The girl in the candy shop never wants a caramel after the third day. Everything grows tiresome after a while. Now that I've exhausted my list of fads, a horrible future confronts me—thirty-three years of

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age, enough money to supply my needs, and no new fad on which to waste the surplus. What am I to do?"

"There's always the Salvation Army," laughed Martha.

"Yes, or the Anti-Cigarette Society," he responded lightly.

A porter carrying two large suit-cases, each covered with many foreign labels, crossed the veranda toward the waiting 'bus at the foot of the steps. Another man, evidently a valet, followed with more luggage, and then a tall, distinguished-looking man of uncertain age emerged from the hotel. He gazed curiously at Martha, but his eyes lighted up with recognition when they fell upon Clayton.

"Hello, Clayton, what are you doing here?" he inquired loudly.

Clayton looked up with just a shadow of annoyance, but, with the well-bred air of a gentleman, rose and extended his hand.

"How are you, Gordon?" he said easily.

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"I haven't seen you since the Compton breach of promise case."

Gordon winced at the reminder, but gave utterance to a forced laugh.

"You toasted me to a turn that time," he admitted. "Do you know, Clayton, ever since you had me on the witness stand, I've been wanting to engage you to handle my own business."

"Thank you," replied Clayton, coldly. "But I don't care for your kind of business."

"What do you mean?"

"I prefer the kind where there is never a woman in the case."

Gordon laughed again uneasily.

"I can't help it every time a girl takes me seriously. I offered to settle handsomely then, but like all these women, they think because I'm rich I am an easy mark. Now, if you'll see me in New York—maybe we can come to terms."

"I fancy not," replied Clayton, briefly.

Gordon's eyes, even during this brief

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conversation, had never left Martha, whose attention was given to her scarabs.

"Deuced pretty girl!" remarked Gordon, quietly, to Clayton. "You might introduce me."

"Are you leaving the hotel?"

"Yes—in a few minutes."

"Then I've no objection. Miss Farnum, may I present Mr. Sanford Gordon, of New York?"

"Charmed to meet you, Miss Farnum," cried Gordon, extending his hand as Martha merely bowed. "Sorry I'm leaving the hotel just when I meet the only interesting person here." Then, aside to Clayton as he bowed to Martha and passed out of earshot: "Who is she?"

Clayton coughed ominously.

"She is the companion of a Mrs. Kilpatrick."

Gordon's face showed his disappointment.

"Oh, I say," he murmured. "A paid companion? Anyhow, she's deuced good-

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looking." He glanced back at Martha, then turned. "See you in New York, Clayton, and don't forget my offer."

"I didn't care to introduce him to you, Miss Farnum," explained Clayton, after Gordon had driven away in the 'bus. "He's not the sort of man I should care to have any girl know well."

"Oh, it's of no consequence," laughed Martha. "I have heard of him. The Sunday papers have printed lots of stories about his little attentions to actresses. He's been with that English actress here most of the time."

"He generally is with some kind of an actress," admitted Clayton.

"Mrs. Dainton, I mean. Is she such a great actress?"

"Well," sparred Clayton, carefully examining another scarab, "opinions differ as to her greatness."

"But she must make an awful lot of money," insisted Martha.

"She *spends* an awful lot."

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"Isn't that the same thing?"

"Not always. You have to get the money before you can spend it."

"Then she has another income, like Mrs. Kilpatrick, I suppose?"

"She probably has another income, only it's not quite the same. In fact— But I don't think we had better worry about her, Miss Farnum."

"But I'm interested. Perhaps—why, perhaps I might go on the stage myself, some day," added Martha, suddenly, as an afterthought.

"You go on the stage?" laughed Clayton. "Nonsense!"

"I don't see why it is nonsense," cried Martha, rising to her feet so suddenly that Clayton had only time to grasp the case of precious scarabs in time to save them from a fall. "I must do something, and from what I have seen of theatrical people here at this hotel, they all have plenty of money. Even that Miss Forsythe, who dresses so loudly, earns a lot."

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Clayton leaned back in his chair and laughed.

"My dear child," he tried to explain, "I know the girl you mean. She's a show-girl in New York. I saw her at the station just now when my train arrived. To see her in that elaborate costume, you wouldn't believe that her salary is just twenty dollars a week, would you?"

"Twenty dollars a week?"

"Yes. She's in the chorus."

"But how can she afford to stay at this hotel on such a salary?"

At that Clayton coughed and began to sort out the scarabs.

"She probably also has an—er—independent source of income," he stammered.

"Could I get twenty dollars a week on the stage?" inquired Martha, thoughtfully, not noticing his confusion.

"Very likely, if you are willing to start in the chorus," replied Clayton.

Martha clenched her fists with determination.

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"Why, I'd start at the very bottom; I'd work like anything, to succeed," she said tensely.

Clayton closed the case and rose to his feet.

"Really, Miss Farnum, I didn't know you were so much in earnest about it," he explained.

"You see, my service with Mrs. Kilpatrick ends in a few days," said Martha, simply. "She is going to Italy, and there is nothing left for me to do but return home, and our people are too poor and I must earn a living to help them."

"So you really want to go on the stage?" said Clayton, thoughtfully. "I wouldn't advise it. There are too many dangers, too many temptations."

"Do you think I care for the dangers?" cried Martha, almost contemptuously. "All of the temptations are not on the stage. The department stores, the shops, the offices—why not think of them? Girls work there, hundreds and thousands of

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them. But the moment a girl mentions the stage, some one cries out about the temptations. It's absurd."

The fiery outburst of the young girl startled Clayton, who realized that in an argument on this theme he was likely to be worsted. Moreover, he was placed in the unenviable position of being obliged to argue against a course which he felt sure would be disastrous, or at least difficult, while during their short talk he had grown to be genuinely interested in Martha. Like a prudent general, he sought safety in retreat.

"About these scarabs," he began, "I should like to speak to Mrs. Kilpatrick."

Martha's thoughts, however, so suddenly directed to a new channel, were difficult to concentrate on anything so mundane as scarabs. It was several seconds before she recollected herself and answered his question:

"Oh, yes," she repeated. "Mrs. Kil-

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patrick is in parlor A. She said she would be glad to see you a little later."

Clayton bowed. "And I won't say farewell," he said, "as I'll surely see you at dinner."

"The stage," repeated Martha, dreamily, after he had gone, sinking into one of the large chairs and placing both hands to her throbbing temples. "The stage. Why not? Why not?"

CHAPTER IV

A GLIMPSE INTO THE PAST

"THIS is the sun parlor, Pinkie," cried Flossie, ushering in the girl who had just found a haven of refuge and a sanctuary for the penniless at the Springs. "My word, but we do put on style at this rest-cure. I'm having the time of my young life."

Pinkie Lexington gazed around her, and sighed with relief. The well-dressed women in the distance made her instinctively think of her own somewhat bedraggled tailor-made suit, badly wrinkled from the train journey. Even at its best, it suggested the "Take me home for \$12.99" signs of the bargain counters. Furthermore, Pinkie's hat was of the early

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spring vintage, and the ribbon was faded. Her pride and her glory had always been her hair, large blond masses of which protruded from beneath the rim of her straw hat, but a visit to a hair-dresser was a luxury Pinkie had not known in months. Added to this, Pinkie had become unusually heavy—and therefore always in need of the most perfect grooming in order to keep up appearances—and it may be easily understood that she was not appearing to the best advantage. This fact Flossie had noticed with keen inward delight, for her own smartness and prettiness naturally took on added luster when placed in contrast with poor Pinkie's poverty.

But Pinkie sighed with contentment. Notwithstanding a few personal deficiencies of dress and adornment, it was a relief to be in a hotel where one could be assured of three excellent meals a day.

"It's grand to be in a real place after those awful one-night stands," sighed

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Pinkie. "But I'm afraid I won't really enjoy it—I'm on a diet."

"What?" inquired Flossie.

"I'm reducing," insisted Pinkie, sadly.

"Why didn't you go on a diet last week when you were broke?" demanded Flossie.

"Now, you are here as my guest, and if you don't eat I'll be insulted. Just wait until I introduce you to Mr. Zinsheimer."

"I'm just dying to meet him," said Pinkie, demurely. "*Feathers*, isn't it?"

"One of the biggest importers in New York," said Flossie, proudly. "He's a real gentleman. Nothing but wine."

"I know I shall like him," repeated Pinkie.

Flossie peered at her chum suspiciously, and then laughed.

"Well, don't like him too much. I saw him first."

Pinkie's large eyes almost filled with tears.

"Why, Flossie, how can you? I'm sure

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I don't want to steal your gentleman friend."

Flossie put her arm affectionately around Pinkie's somewhat large waist and laughed.

"Never mind, dear, I was only joking. Of course you know it is understood that Mr. Zinsheimer and I are to get married as soon as my lawsuit is settled."

Zinsheimer himself entered at this juncture, and Pinkie was formally introduced to the generous feather importer. She started to cry as he patted her hand cordially, holding it just a trifle longer than was absolutely necessary, and thereby eliciting a warning look from the alert Flossie.

"Oh, Mr. Zinsheimer, it's such a relief to meet a real gentleman," cried Pinkie, half in tears. "Honestly, I could almost hug you for your kindness to a poor little shipwrecked, stranded girl. I am so helpless and alone."

"There, there, now, don't cry," pro-

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tested "Marky." "Your Uncle Marky will see that you don't go hungry this trip."

At this point Flossie dexterously inserted herself between the couple and coughed until "Marky" let Pinkie's hand drop.

"Didn't I say you'd like him, Pinkie?" she observed sharply.

"Let's go over and play roulette," suggested Zinsheimer. "Maybe we can win enough to get Pinkie a new outfit, eh?" And he looked doubtfully over the somewhat worn suit which was poor Pinkie's only possession.

At that Pinkie sobbed audibly. "I'm sorry to disgrace you," she wailed, "but the horrid manager of the hotel in Indianapolis wouldn't let me take my trunk until I paid him seventeen dollars and forty-five cents. And where could I get all that money?"

Zinsheimer patted her hand encouragingly. "Come over to the Casino," he

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whispered. "We'll try our luck at the wheel." And with Flossie clinging to his right arm and Pinkie to his left, the genial feather importer started toward the Casino. At the head of the stairway the trio almost collided with Mrs. Dainton's footman, who was carrying the Pomeranian. Close behind came Mrs. Dainton herself, her maids, and her manager. Zinsheimer whispered to the girls quickly.

"That's the English actress," he said quietly. "I once knew her, but we don't speak now as we pass by. Let's be real supercilious."

So, as Zinsheimer and the girls passed by ostentatiously, Pinkie and Flossie, taking their cue, broke forth into peals of merry laughter, while Zinsheimer so guided the party that Mrs. Dainton had to step to one side to avoid Flossie's rattling chatelaines.

Mrs. Dainton sank into an easy-chair, and Victor hurriedly adjusted the cushions for her comfort.

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"I beg Madame's pardon, but when shall we leave?" inquired the obsequious personal manager.

"I don't expect to leave at all," replied Mrs. Dainton, sharply.

Anxious to get her back to New York, Mrs. Dainton's manager hoped this last annoyance would move her.

"But the rehearsals for your new play," he said.

"Wire the New York management to send the company out here. We will rehearse here."

Weldon could not refrain from an audible expression of despair, being for a moment dumbfounded at the thought of the expense. Neither Mrs. Dainton nor her manager noticed that a young girl in a simple black gown, who had evidently been searching for a magazine left in one of the chairs, had heard what they said.

"But if the players don't suit—" expostulated Weldon.

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"Send them back to New York and get another lot."

"But that will be very expensive."

"What of that?" inquired Mrs. Dainton, languidly. "It's not my money."

Weldon hesitated and then bowed.

"Just as you say, Madame," he said weakly. "I will wire the New York management." And scarcely able to conceal his indignation at this latest whim, Weldon withdrew to telegraph their New York backers the full details of her latest eccentricity.

Martha Farnum, still holding the magazine she had recovered, hesitated. Then, struck by a sudden thought, she came forward timidly to the famous actress.

"May I—may I speak to you just for a moment?" she asked nervously.

Mrs. Dainton turned in surprise, looked her over carefully from head to foot, and asked carelessly: "Who are you?"

"My name is Martha Farnum, and—"

"Well?"

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"I heard you just now—"

"It isn't a nice thing to listen."

"But I couldn't help it—"

"You mean I spoke so loudly?"

"No—but you spoke so distinctly—"

Mrs. Dainton smiled with pleasure.

"The critics always said my voice carried well, and that my enunciation was perfect," she said, flattered. "Well, what can I do for you, my dear?"

Martha hesitated and stammered. "I—I am anxious to go on the stage," she faltered.

"What can you do?" inquired Mrs. Dainton.

"I cannot tell until I have tried," confessed Martha.

"You mean you have had no experience? I'm sorry, but I've made it a rule never to give any young girl her first engagement on the stage."

"But why?" gasped Martha.

"Because I don't approve of their going on the stage."

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"Yet you yourself have won success," argued Martha. "And you must have started some time."

Motioning Martha to bring a chair and sit beside her, Mrs. Dainton leaned forward impulsively and took her hands in her own.

"You don't know all that my success has cost me, my dear," she said simply. "Success is a wonderful thing, but the road to it is paved with temptations."

"I know all that, but surely there must be some way to overcome the obstacles," insisted Martha.

"I once thought the same," mused Mrs. Dainton, with a far-away look in her eyes. "But there came a time when I hated myself, and all the world. Shall I tell you a story, my dear?"

"I would love to hear it," replied Martha, earnestly, gazing into the eyes of the elder woman.

"Once there was another girl, like you: young, ambitious, innocent," began Mrs.

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Dainton, softly. "She, too, was poor and wretched. But some people called her handsome. As so many others have done under similar circumstances, she turned toward the stage. She commenced at the very bottom in the chorus of a London musical production. The company she was with came to America, and little by little she progressed, but oh, it was such hard work and the poverty was so grinding. Her salary was almost nothing. Soon, in this strange country, she was in debt. The landlady of her boarding-house was kind for a week or so, but the girl was hopelessly involved. Then, one day, a note came to the theater. She opened it, and found inside—a hundred-dollar bill."

"A hundred-dollar bill?" repeated Martha, wonderingly.

"Yes, without a word of explanation. The girl didn't know what to do with the money. She could not return it. She finally spent it."

"A hundred dollars!" repeated Martha.

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"A few nights later came another note. Another hundred-dollar bill. A third and a fourth followed. Flowers, diamonds, a love-letter, and last of all—a man."

"A man?" repeated Martha, curiously.

"The man had a fortune. The girl was penniless. She couldn't repay the money, for she had spent it. The man was kind, courteous, good-looking—in short, just the kind of man to win a girl's heart."

"And so they were married?" ventured Martha.

"No, my dear." Mrs. Dainton shook her head sadly. "They did not marry. He gave her everything money could buy, and she, poor fool, accepted it. When the inevitable happened, when the man left her without a word of farewell, she reaped the bitterness she had sown. But the experience gave her renewed energy. She was determined to triumph in spite of it. And she did. She succeeded. Years afterward she met that man again. She saw

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him humble himself a second time before her feet and beg her love in vain."

"That was splendid," cried Martha, clasping her hands.

"It was the only punishment she could inflict," added Mrs. Dainton, bitterly, rising to her feet and beckoning to her maid. "He had made her suffer deeply, and though she had been proud of her success, the proudest moment of her life was when she publicly humiliated the man who had deceived and wronged her in the past."

Martha rose to her feet, and held out her hand in sympathy.

"I am so sorry, Mrs. Dainton," she said simply.

"Sorry, my dear child?" repeated Mrs. Dainton, cheerfully. "Why need you be? That was what happened to a friend of mine, and that's why I will not help you or any one else to go on the stage."

"But surely," cried Martha, desperately, "some people succeed without pain and unhappiness?"

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Mrs. Dainton kissed the girl affectionately.

"You are young, and like all young people, you flatter yourself that you will be the exception," she said. "Good-bye, my dear. I dare say all my advice will be wasted, for if it is in the blood, if you have the call of the footlights in your soul and the fire of ambition in your heart, nothing can stop you in your career; neither the advice of an old woman nor the experience of others. Good-bye, my dear. Au revoir."

CHAPTER V

STRICTLY A BUSINESS BARGAIN

CLAYTON found Martha in a corner of the veranda ten minutes later, in a brown study.

"Here, this will never do," he began cheerfully. "Is it as bad as that?"

Martha looked up with an attempt at cheerfulness.

"It is of no consequence," she said simply. "You wouldn't understand."

"Am I so dense as all that?" he protested. "Any one with half an eye could see that you are in trouble, and I'd like to help if I can be of any assistance."

Martha looked up at the lawyer hopefully. "Mr. Clayton," she said, "Mrs. Kilpatrick says you are from New York.

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I've never been there. A few moments ago I said I wanted to go on the stage, and you laughed at me. Now, may I ask you seriously for your advice, and will you give me a serious answer?"

Clayton sat down by her side. "Fire away," he commanded.

"In the first place, I have firmly decided to go on the stage," explained Martha. "I have great ambition, I have been told that I read well, and I must make a living somehow. That settled, the only problem is the way to go at it. Will you advise me?"

"But you are not cut out for that sort of life," protested Clayton. "You—you should marry—you'll find more real happiness there."

"Have you done that?" inquired Martha.

"That's different. I'm a man."

"Oh, yes, and being one, you think we women can't get along without you."

"No one can live happily without love."

Strictly a Business Bargain

"If you have success, you don't need love," insisted Martha.

"My dear child," Clayton tried to explain, "the greatest success means nothing if the right person does not share it with you."

Martha rose to her feet proudly.

"I will risk its meaning nothing if I can only have it."

"Do you mean that?" inquired Clayton, looking at her.

"Yes."

"And you have made up your mind that you must have a career?"

"Absolutely."

Clayton half laughed at her earnestness.

"Have you any money?" he asked suddenly.

"No," admitted Martha, reluctantly.

"That is, not much."

"Then how will you begin?"

"I don't know."

"You will find money very necessary."

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"I'll manage somehow," declared Martha, with conviction.

Clayton gazed at her curiously for a few moments. Something about the girl must have struck him as being distinctly out of the ordinary. Twice he started to speak, but each time hesitated as though uncertain what to say. "I've got an idea," he blurted out finally.

Martha turned toward him inquiringly, but did not speak.

"I'll assist you," explained Clayton. "Suppose I lend you the necessary capital for you to go to New York and live until you meet with this success you are determined shall come to you?"

"Oh, but I couldn't let you do that," protested Martha. "People might talk, and anyhow, I am determined to succeed on my merits, if at all."

"Wait," interrupted Clayton. "This is a cold-blooded business proposition. If a man opens a store, he must have capital to start with. If a miner goes prospecting,

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he must have some one 'grub-stake' him to start—that is, give him food and money to last until he strikes pay dirt. In any venture it is the same; capital is necessary—why not let me capitalize yours? After you succeed, you can pay back the original investment, with regular business interest."

"But if I fail—you have no security."

"That's my risk. Besides, I've another reason. I have spent enough on the different fads I've had to send a dozen girls through college. I've wasted thousands of dollars collecting useless things like old postage stamps and antiques, but never once has it occurred to me to collect samples of character."

"I don't quite understand." Martha's eyes were wide open in amazement.

"Your attitude toward success interests me."

"I'm sure it is justified," insisted Martha.

"That remains to be seen. It is under-

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stood that I will start you on this career purely as a business proposition. But if I am to furnish the money, I must have the controlling interest in the partnership. You are to be absolutely guided by what I say, to be responsible to me, and to follow my advice in all things."

"Won't I even have a minority vote?" pouted Martha.

"Yes, but the presiding officer can overrule you any time he wishes. In other words, I shall be practically your—your—"

"What?"

"Your guardian. But remember—if I start you on this life where you will be plunged at once into the vortex of all that is fascinating and attractive, you will perhaps find many admirers. No dragging Love along with Success if we should meet him on the way."

Martha clapped her hands gleefully.

"I shall be too busy cultivating Success

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to even recognize Love if I should meet him," she cried gaily.

"Good. Then it's down with Love?"

"Yes," responded Martha. "And up with Success."

"Then that's settled," responded Clayton, in a businesslike tone, looking at his watch. "And now I think we'd better get some dinner."

CHAPTER VI

"WHERE EVERYTHING IS HOMELIKE"

"If there's one thing I'm proud of about my boarding-house," insisted Mrs. Anderson, when discussing the *pension* for vagrant Thespians which she had conducted for many years, "it's the homelike atmosphere. Makes folks feel at home right away, the moment they set foot in my parlor."

Mrs. Anderson, commonly called "Aunt Jane" by the professional patrons who came back to her hospitable roof year after year, was justly proud of the affection and esteem in which she was obviously held. A motherly old lady of not less than fifty, a widow with no children, Mrs. Anderson devoted her entire time to main-

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taining an establishment which should be unique. Actors as a rule dread boarding-houses. There is something about such institutions which instinctively causes a chill of apprehension to run up and down their backs. Especially is this true of boarding-houses which advertise that they cater to the theatrical profession. But the instant image of cheapness, squalor, ill-kept rooms and badly cooked food, which is conjured up by the mere mention of "theatrical boarding-house," has no relation to Aunt Jane's.

Hers was different. It is hard to tell how, but when once a visitor entered her front parlor it seemed different from all the rest. Old-fashioned in some respects, it was strictly up to date in others. There was no red table-cloth on the table, no gilt-framed chromos on wooden easels, no landscapes in glaring colors on the walls. Instead, on the piano, on the mantel, and even on the walls, one found neatly framed photos of theatrical celebrities,

"Where Everything is Homelike"

which, as one could see upon close examination, were autographed, with here and there a few homely sentiments of good wishes "To Dear Aunt Jane."

Mrs. Anderson's establishment, in fact, was one of the last of a fast disappearing type of boarding-house, the extinction of which will never be regretted in spite of the natural sorrow at the passing of a home with so many virtues as that presided over by the estimable "Aunt Jane." But modern apartment hotels, in which excellent accommodations can be had for the same price one formerly gave for a hall bedroom, are numbering the days of the old brownstone front boarding-houses in the neighborhood of the New York theatrical district. Mrs. Anderson's was but a stone's throw from Broadway, in a house which had once been a feature of the social life of the city; but day after day now, the grim sound of exploding dynamite in neighboring streets came as a warning that modern skyscrapers and steel buildings

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were gradually supplanting the older structures.

For twenty-three years Mrs. Anderson had conducted her homelike establishment. As keenly alert to business now as formerly, Mrs. Anderson was careful not to let her house deteriorate. Which explains why, on a certain Saturday afternoon in mid-winter, she was busily engaged in personally superintending the rearrangement of the parlor furniture and the placing of certain photographs on the mantel and the piano. Lizzie, the maid of all work, entered with a card, for Mrs. Anderson had been so absorbed in her work that she had not heard the bell ring.

"Arthur Mortimer, leading *juvenile*," read Lizzie, as Mrs. Anderson turned toward her. "He's in the hall. Say, what's a *juvenile*?"

"Refers to the kind of work he does," responded Mrs. Anderson, sharply.

"Work?" repeated Lizzie, astounded. "Why, he's an actor."

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The unconscious sarcasm of the remark was passed unnoticed by Mrs. Anderson.

Mr. Mortimer turned out to be a pleasing young chap, smartly but not expensively dressed, about twenty-two years of age, and very nervous. He twirled his derby in his hands, and seemed quite embarrassed when Mrs. Anderson beamed a cordial welcome upon him.

"I—I am looking for a room," began Mortimer. "I was referred to you."

"Are you in the profession?" inquired Aunt Jane, motioning toward a comfortable arm-chair.

"I graduated last June from the dramatic school, but I haven't done much yet. I couldn't afford expensive rooms—"

"That's all right, Mr. Mortimer," interrupted Aunt Jane. "I like to have beginners. They pay their bills. And I only want refined people who behave themselves. Of course a little impromptu frivolity makes every one feel at home, and

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if there's one thing I always try to do, it is to make my house homelike."

"I'm sure it is that."

"Yes, sir. A real home, especially for the lonely young girls I have living with me here. Why, I have one young lady staying here now who is under my *special* protection. The gentleman who sent her to me said he knew of my reputation, and that he wanted me to be a *real mother* to her."

"I hope I may be admitted into this happy family," ventured Mortimer, smiling.

"I'm so proud of his trust in me," continued Aunt Jane, evidently started on a pet theme, "that I never let that girl out of my sight—except, of course, when she's at the theater. And I have to telephone him every day and tell him what she's doing. But how I run on—here's Lizzie, who will show you some of the rooms. Did you want a big room or a small room?"

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"That depends on the price," stammered Mortimer, rising.

Lizzie had handed Mrs. Anderson a telegram, and stood waiting for instructions.

"Lizzie, show Mr. Mortimer the vacant rooms on the third and fourth floors front," directed Aunt Jane, tearing open the dispatch. "Oh, by the way, Mr. Mortimer, do you happen to have a photograph you can let me have?"

"My photograph?" repeated Mortimer, surprised and flattered. "I have some in my trunk."

"If you come with us I'll want to include yours in my collection of famous actors," explained Aunt Jane.

"But I'm not famous—" protested Mortimer.

"Never mind—you will be some day. You see all these photographs of celebrities"—she waved her hand—"all of these people are with me now, except Maude Adams, Ethel Barrymore and one or two

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others. Somewhere in this house I have a photograph of every actor or actress who ever stayed here. Fifteen years and more I've kept them. Many a famous star of to-day gave me a photograph years ago, when only an unknown lodger in my happy little home."

"I'll sure bring you one," cried the delighted Mortimer. As he started toward the hall, with Lizzie as his guide, Mrs. Anderson called after them:

"One moment, Lizzie," she cried, holding the telegram. "Mr. Lawrence is coming from Boston this evening and wants his old room. Be sure and have it ready."

"Yes, ma'am," responded the ubiquitous Lizzie.

"And just a moment," continued Mrs. Anderson, in a confidential tone, beckoning to the slavey. "Go up to the garret and get me that large picture of Mr. Lawrence we had on the piano last time he was here."

"Yes, ma'am."

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"Here, take this one with you," added Aunt Jane, craftily, picking up a photograph of a blond man with curly hair. "It's Jimmy Carlton—he's gone to California and won't be back until spring. Put this one away with the others. And see that Mr. Lawrence's picture is nicely dusted. I want him to feel at home when he comes in and sees it on the piano."

Mortimer, who was busily looking at the photographs, suddenly saw one he recognized.

"Isn't that Flossie Forsythe?" he inquired.

"The very same," answered Mrs. Anderson. "She's staying here, too—she and her chum, Miss Lexington. Lizzie, show Mr. Mortimer the house—and Lizzie," she added confidentially, "recommend the fourth floor front. It ain't no more, but the bath always rents the third easier."

Half a moment later, with Lizzie on the fourth floor, the bell rang again and this time Mrs. Anderson herself was com-

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pelled to answer it. A messenger boy with a large box of flowers stepped into the hallway. Mrs. Anderson took the box and looked at the card.

"For Miss Farnum?" she sniffed. "Humph! This is the third time since Sunday she's had flowers from somewhere. Who sent them, boy?"

The snub-nosed Mercury gazed up at her and winked.

"How d'je t'ink I knows de guy's name?" he retorted.

"Impudent!" replied Aunt Jane.

"An' say, lady, I got a note also for Miss—Miss Farnum."

"Give it to me, then, you young rascal."

"Nixey." The boy shook his head and winked again. "Told me to give it to Miss Farnum 'erself."

"But I can give it to her."

"Maybe my eye's green, too," answered the messenger. "De gent who give me dis said give it only to her. If she ain't in, I got to come back when she is."

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"Miss Farnum is not in," declared Aunt Jane, indignantly. "And you're a rude, disrespectful boy, to speak so to your elders."

"Well, say, when will her nibs get back?"

"In about half an hour," retorted Aunt Jane, slamming the door on him and taking the box into the parlor. Once there, she peered curiously at the box. It was only an ordinary florist's box, but a big one, and it evidently contained costly, long-stemmed American Beauties. There was a small note attached to the box, with the name "Martha Farnum" on the envelope.

Mrs. Anderson debated about five seconds whether or not it was her duty to examine the note. Of course she had no right to look, but she concluded that her position as Martha's temporary guardian demanded that she examine carefully anything that would throw light upon the per-

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son who was sending so many flowers to her young charge.

"There's a card inside, sure, and perhaps a name," she argued, with easy sophistry. "It's my duty to look. Some young spark is trying to make love to Martha under my very nose."

She nervously tore off the envelope, opened it and took out a card. She read it and threw up her hands in disappointment. The card was blank, except for the written words: "From your unknown admirer."

"Hello! Blooms! For me?" cried Flossie Forsythe, resplendent in furs and a large picture-hat, bursting into the room just as Mrs. Anderson replaced the card. "Pinkie, look at the flowers some one sent me," she added, turning to summon the sad-eyed Miss Lexington, who still appeared dejected and deserted as she stood in the doorway, last season's walking-suit hanging unevenly from her highly devel-

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oped figure and appearing a trifle tight in certain spots.

"I suppose Marky sent them," said Pinkie, dropping upon the sofa in disgust. "I wish some guy would slip me a beefsteak over the footlights some time instead of flowers."

Mrs. Anderson politely but firmly rescued the flowers from Flossie's clutches.

"For Miss Farnum," she said coldly, taking the box to the piano out of harm's way.

"What rot," ejaculated Flossie. "I never seen a girl get so many flowers."

Pinkie sighed. "I haven't had an orchid this season," she said sadly.

"Never mind, dear," cried Flossie, sinking onto the sofa by her side. "Wait until the new show goes on, and we both make hits. You'll be covered with flowers."

"It will take some flowers to cover me," responded Pinkie, surveying her ample girth with regret. "But what gets me, is how Martha Farnum wins out with the

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boobs who send her flowers. Why, she ain't got no style. And she's only a beginner in the chorus, too."

"But they do say she's made the biggest hit ever known in the Casino since I left last spring," drawled Flossie, carelessly.

"Pity you didn't stay, dear," smiled Pinkie. "But then, of course, you weren't in the chorus."

"I should say not," cried Flossie, indignantly. "I haven't been in any chorus for two years. It's sextettes or nothing with me hereafter, and you know I don't have to work."

"How's your lawsuit coming on?" inquired Pinkie, innocently.

"Oh, the lawyers are still fighting."

"Where is this lawsuit, anyhow?"

"Oh, somewhere out in British Columbia. You wouldn't know the name of the town if I told you. If I win, I am going to star in musical comedy."

"And if you lose?"



“I HAVN’T HAD AN ORCHID THIS SEASON.”

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"Back to the sextette, I guess, unless Mr. Zinsheimer will star me."

"Where is 'Feathers'?" yawned Pinkie. "Haven't seen him for a week."

"Never you mind where he is," retorted Flossie, suddenly turning to her chum, suspiciously. "You've been askin' too many questions about Mr. Zinsheimer lately. Don't you be ungrateful. Remember all I did for you."

Pinkie almost cried at this unjust insinuation. "Why, Flossie," she half sobbed, "I don't want Marky. The idea of thinking I'd want to steal him away from my dearest friend."

As Flossie consoled Pinkie and apologized, Mrs. Anderson approached a delicate subject nervously but with a determination strengthened by the memory of many similar occasions. "Young ladies," she began, "I hope you haven't forgotten about our little account."

"It shall be settled this evening, without fail," replied Flossie, rising haughtily. "I

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am sorry if I have inconvenienced you, but you shall have a check after dinner."

"You know I am perfectly willing to let the bills run on," explained Mrs. Anderson, with that ever-present doubt that one always has in dunning delinquents, "but neither of you young ladies has been trying to get a position."

"Not trying, indeed," repeated Pinkie. "We go to the managers' offices every day, but the horrid brutes will not see us."

"But look at Miss Farnum," said Aunt Jane. "She came here without experience, and secured an engagement instantly."

"Yes, in the chorus," sneered Flossie. "Fancy us in the chorus," rising and glancing admiringly at her well-rounded figure. "I want lines."

"But Martha didn't mind the chorus," cried Mrs. Anderson, warmly. "She began at the bottom, and if I do say it myself, I am proud of the way she has succeeded."

"Succeeded?" repeated Flossie. "I guess

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she has, if you judge by the number of times messenger boys bring her notes and flowers and presents. I'll bet there's a diamond tiara hidden in those flowers now." She moved toward the box, picked it up curiously, and lifted the top. "American Beauties, eh?" she added. "I counted the number of messenger boys who came here yesterday to see Martha, and how many do you think there were? Seven."

"I half believe she sends the things to herself," pouted Pinkie, maliciously.

"She couldn't, my dear, on eighteen dollars a week in the chorus," laughed Flossie. "There's no use talking, Aunt Jane—Martha may have been a little wildflower when she blew into New York from the woods of Indiana or Ohio or wherever it was, but one thing you must give her credit for: some one must be awfully stuck on her."

CHAPTER VII

A HUNDRED-DOLLAR BILL

MARTHA walked home from the theater. It was after the *matinée*, in early winter, the period of the year when upper Broadway is the most wonderful street in all the world. Crowds of smartly dressed women and well-groomed men surged to and fro; taxicabs and private limousines darted in every direction; the clanging of the gongs of the street-cars and the shrill cries of newsboys added to the general confusion; and the lights of a thousand electric signs glared brilliantly in the semi-darkness of early nightfall. Shop windows tempted the passer-by most alluringly, and Martha gazed longingly into many of them, but shook her head resolutely at

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the mere notion of purchasing anything. This was New York. This was life. At last she, Martha Farnum, an insignificant atom from a remote country town, was on Broadway, actually a part of Broadway life, for she was the second girl from the end in the new Casino production, "The Pet of Paris," and for more than four months now had been thrilled, fascinated and enthralled by the lure of the stage.

During all these weeks, she had lived quietly and regularly at Mrs. Anderson's boarding-house. Clayton had met her at the Grand Central Station when she arrived in New York and had taken her to the place, introducing her to Mrs. Anderson in words which she had resented, though she had realized at the time that he was quite justified in his demands.

"Miss Farnum will be in your charge," he had explained. "It is understood that she is to do exactly as you direct in all things. She is not to accept dinner invi-

A Hundred-Dollar Bill

tations from any one, she is to come straight home after each performance, and she is to go nowhere unless you accompany her."

These galling restrictions were now, however, beginning to prove irksome. Youth cannot be chained too tightly without tugging at its bonds. So it was with Martha after four months of the free-and-easy associations behind the scenes, where even the best behaved girl will talk of the little supper at which she was a guest the night before. In fact, the hard work of rehearsals and the unusual hours which the stage requires its people to adopt, often made Martha wish that she, too, could have the freedom and the privileges which the other girls in "The Pet of Paris" enjoyed.

Consequently, when she arrived home this particular afternoon and threw herself into a large easy-chair, utterly tired, and just a little regretful that she had to dine in the somewhat gloomy, old-fash-

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ioned house, it was not with the greatest pleasure in the world that she prepared to answer to the usual cross-examination of well-meaning but sharp-tongued Aunt Jane.

"Did you come straight home after the matinée?" inquired the latter.

"Of course," answered Martha, sleepily. "There was such a crowded house. And so many encores, I am dead tired."

"You seem much later than usual?"

"Now, Aunt Jane, don't ask so many questions. It's Martha this and Martha that and 'Martha, where have you been?' all day long, until I am beginning to get sick and tired of it."

"It is all for your own good, and you know whose instructions I am carrying out."

"I know," pouted Martha, regretfully. "But don't you think he is a little unreasonable? How could a bit of supper after the show hurt any one? Other girls go."

"Has your 'unknown admirer' been

A Hundred-Dollar Bill

asking you to dine with him?" inquired Mrs. Anderson, sharply.

"My 'unknown admirer'?" repeated Martha, blankly. "Whom do you mean?"

"The one who sent you these flowers," cried Aunt Jane, bringing the box to Martha, who gazed in surprise at the splendid roses.

"More flowers, and from a man I have never spoken to," exclaimed Martha, reading the note.

At this moment Lizzie opened the door from the hall and entered.

"If you please, ma'am, that messenger boy is here again," she said. "He wants to see Miss Farnum herself."

"It's the boy who brought the flowers," explained Aunt Jane. "He has a note he won't give to any one but you."

"How exciting," cried Martha. "Do have him in."

Messenger No. 109 winked his eye maliciously at Mrs. Anderson, and tipped his cap respectfully to Martha, whom,

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from the directions regarding his note, he evidently deemed a person of some importance. Martha opened the envelope, and a yellow-backed bill fluttered to the floor. Mrs. Anderson gasped, Lizzie stared, and the messenger boy politely picked it up and returned it to Martha. It was a hundred-dollar bill.

"Is dere any answer, lady?" inquired 109 stolidly.

Martha hesitated. She looked at the envelope again, then looked at the piece of paper which had enclosed the hundred-dollar bill.

"No," she said simply. "Yes—wait a second."

The boy paused at the door, and Martha whispered a few words into his ear. "Do you understand?" she asked.

"Betcher life," cried 109. "I'm on, lady, I'm on." And with a merry whistle and another wink at the excited Aunt Jane, 109 made a dignified and breezy exit, followed by the surprised Lizzie.



“ MORE FLOWERS AND FROM A MAN I HAVE NEVER SPOKEN TO.”

A Hundred-Dollar Bill

"Well," said Mrs. Anderson, grimly, sitting with her arms folded, "I'm waiting."

"Waiting for what, 'Aunt Jane?" inquired Martha.

"For an explanation of this extraordinary scene. Who sent you that money, and what do you intend to do with it?"

Martha half laughed at her earnestness.

"I can't tell you just now, Aunt Jane," she said.

"But I must know. When Mr. Clayton brought you to me, he asked me to look out for you, and I mean to do so."

"And so you have. You've been everything that you could be, dear and thoughtful, but it's got so I'm the laughing-stock of the entire company. I daren't take a step out of this house but you must be fully informed about everything I do and everywhere I go."

"Mr. Clayton wishes to know."

"If Mr. Clayton wishes to know, why doesn't he come and ask me? He hasn't

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been here more than twice in the past four months. Am I to blame if I wish some innocent amusement? He never thinks of me, and when some one else does seem to take an interest in my affairs, and show me a little attention, am I to blame if I like it?"

"You are to blame for accepting hundred-dollar bills."

"But I haven't accepted them yet. I haven't been able to return them before this—"

"What? There were others?"

"For the past six weeks a messenger boy has brought me a note every Saturday. Each letter contained a hundred-dollar bill."

"Great heavens!" Aunt Jane collapsed on the sofa. "And wasn't there any name signed to the letters?"

"Only the words 'From your unknown admirer.' I could not return the money, for I didn't know his name—until now.

A Hundred-Dollar Bill

This letter I have just received gives his name."

"Who is it, dearie?" inquired Aunt Jane, confidentially, coming to Martha's side. "Perhaps I know him."

"His name is—but there, it doesn't matter." Martha turned away and put both letter and hundred-dollar bill into her handbag.

"It does matter," cried Aunt Jane, indignation and curiosity battling for supremacy. "This is a very serious thing. If a strange man sends a young girl hundreds of dollars, why, he must be crazy about you. Did he send you anything else?"

"A few trifles—some jewelry."

"Has he asked you to marry him?"

"What nonsense," laughed Martha.

"He has only asked me to dinner."

"You must not go, Martha," said Aunt Jane, decisively. "You know Mr. Clayton wouldn't like you to take dinner with other gentlemen."

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"Then why doesn't Mr. Clayton take me to dinner himself?" she cried passionately.

"Mr. Clayton has other things to do."

"Then he must not blame me if I dine with some one else."

"I refuse to let you go, Martha."

"And how will you keep me, please?" demanded Martha, petulantly, not because she really desired to break her covenant with her self-appointed backer, but merely to see what steps he might take if she gave evidence of breaking her parole. "Will you lock all the doors and keep me a prisoner?"

"Never mind," replied Aunt Jane. "Is this unknown admirer coming here to see you, or did you send him word to meet you on the street corner?"

"I sent him word to come here," replied Martha, indignantly. "I have no need to meet him elsewhere. I have nothing to be ashamed of."

"Very well, then," retorted Aunt Jane,



"I REFUSE TO LET YOU GO MARTHA."

A Hundred-Dollar Bill

going toward the library, as the back parlor was ambitiously named. "I'll telephone Mr. Clayton and say I wash my hands of you. If he wants to keep an eye on you, he will have to do it himself after to-night. I'll send for him at once."

"You'll send for him?" cried Martha, gladly.

"I'll telephone him to come as fast as a taxi can bring him," declared Mrs. Anderson. "I guess that will bring you to your senses."

"I hope it does," murmured Martha, softly, burying her face in the fragrant flowers. And to herself she added: "I wonder if he'll come?"

"Come right in, Mr. Zinsheimer," cried the shrill voice of Pinkie Lexington in the outer hall. "I saw you clear across the street and hurried down the back way," she continued, leading him into the parlor. "Flossie has just gone out, but maybe, if you wait, she'll come back soon."

"Well, I don't mind if I do," declared

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Marcus Zinsheimer, shedding his great fur coat and peering curiously at Martha, who busied herself with her flowers by the piano. "Who's that?" he added softly.

"That's Martha Farnum," whispered Pinkie. "She's at the Casino and that haughty—but I'm going to be friends with her."

"As though two chorus girls could be friends," interrupted the knowing "Marky."

"I'm *not* a chorus girl," corrected Pinkie. "And anyhow, she has a very wealthy admirer who might star her, and if he does I'd like to be in her company. See?"

"Oho! That's the racket, eh?" laughed "Marky." "You may be right. A ton of money, an ounce of sense, a pretty girl and a love-sick angel have made many a star in the theatrical firmament."

"And while it lasts, I might just as well be in the push," added Pinkie, wisely. "Gawd knows I need the money."

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"Marky" surveyed Pinkie carefully.

"Why is it you are always so hard up, Pinkie?" he inquired. "You ought to be able to get a good engagement, but I say, there ain't much style about the way you dress. What I like is style—real flashy style—lots of color and ginger."

"I'm sorry I'm so poor," sobbed Pinkie, plaintively. "But I can't help it, Mr. Zinsheimer. You know the company stranded and I haven't had anything to do since. It's very kind of you to be so considerate, Mr. Zinsheimer. Would you mind if I call you 'Feathers'? That's what I always call you to Flossie."

"Well, if you call me 'Feathers,' I won't call you *down*," replied "Marky," laughing laboriously at his own joke. "But now I'll tell you what we'll do. Flossie's out and won't know anything about it, so let's you and me jump into a taxicab and go down to some of the shops. We can just make it before six o'clock, and I'll buy you a lot of fancy things. Eh, what?"

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"Eh, what?" almost shouted Pinkie.

"Do you mean it?"

"Do I mean it?" insisted "Marky."

"Sure. I've got a taxi waiting outside. Will you come?"

Pinkie rose majestically to the occasion. Drying her eyes, and looking anxiously at the parlor clock for fear that it might already be time for Flossie to return before she could get into the taxicab, she grabbed her coat, without even waiting to get a hat, seized "Marky" by the arm and dragged him toward the hallway.

"Will I?" she repeated. "Watch me, kid."



"I'M SORRY I'M SO POOR" SOBBED PINKIE.

CHAPTER VIII

SANFORD GORDON REAPPEARS

A SMART limousine car darted across Broadway, turned the corner, and drew up before the door of Mrs. Anderson's boarding-house. A tall, dark, good-looking chap, whose erect figure was completely enveloped in a fur-lined overcoat, emerged, and walked briskly up the steps. Lizzie answered the bell, and started back in surprise when the stranger calmly stepped inside, closed the door, slipped her a dollar bill, and said quietly:

"Take this card to Miss Farnum. She is expecting me."

"Yes, sir," stammered Lizzie. "Will you wait in the parlor, sir?"

"So this is where she lives?" mused the

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visitor, shaking his head as he looked around the neat but poorly furnished room, with its supply of theatrical photographs and the large picture of Arnold Lawrence, leading man, on the piano. "I'll soon get her out of this miserable hole."

Martha Farnum entered, her step so light that he did not hear her until she touched his arm and extended her hand in greeting. "Mr. Gordon!"

"I received your message," cried Sanford, turning quickly and clasping her hand with such fervor that Martha unconsciously sought to withdraw it. "I'm glad you remember me."

"I remembered the name," explained Martha. "You are a man so much talked about that it is not strange a little country girl should remember the time she first met so celebrated a personage. But when you sent me the note to-night, I realized for the first time that it was you who had been sending me so many presents."

Sanford Gordon Reappears

"Only a few trifles—"

"And so I wanted to see you."

"That was kind of you," replied Gordon, as they sat on the sofa. "I have been wanting to see you all these weeks, but somehow I didn't know how to begin. Finally, to-night, I decided to write you a little message and see if you remembered me."

Martha turned toward him frankly.

"I want to know the meaning of your remarkable presents," she said, with the utmost ingenuousness.

Gordon laughed a trifle, as though to dismiss the matter.

"Nonsense," he declared. "They weren't so very remarkable. A few presents and a little pin-money which I thought might come in handy for a girl getting a small income."

"Such presents would be appreciated by some girls," replied Martha, offering him a small packet which she had held in her hand, "but I have no right to take them."

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"Then you haven't spent anything?" exclaimed Gordon, in surprise, looking at the roll of yellow-backed bills and the half-dozen trinkets which she returned to him.

"Not a dollar. I would have returned them sooner, but I didn't know who the mysterious donor was."

"Please keep the money, Miss Farnum, and the other things. They mean nothing to me, and think of the comfort and pleasure they can bring you."

"I have no right to accept anything from you."

"Then take the money for some one else. There must be some pet charity, some deserving chorus girl who has a sick mother, some fresh-air fund you want to contribute to. Please don't ask me to take back things so freely given."

"No, I cannot take it," replied Martha, firmly.

Gordon twirled his moustache nervously and peered curiously at her. Here was a case, indeed, one which the fastidious

Sanford Gordon Reappears

Sanford had never previously encountered. A chorus girl to refuse money and presents? Unprecedented! How the chaps at the club would chaff him if he ever told the story. He—the best-known boulevardier of Broadway, a welcome guest at every Bohemian gathering, who called actors and managers by their first names and was the most flattered and most sought after member of that queer white-light society of night revellers which regarded the setting of the sun as the dawning of a new day—he, Sanford Gordon, virtually flouted by an obscure chorus girl whom he had deigned to honor with his attentions? Why, the thing was unbelievable.

“Are you in earnest?” he demanded.

“Certainly,” replied Martha, rising. “I cannot be under obligations to you or any one else, especially in money matters.”

“Listen, Miss Farnum,” cried Gordon, coming to her. “My conduct may seem strange to you. Call it a whim, if you

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like. But since I saw you that first night at the Casino, I have wanted to be friends with you. Can't we be friends?"

"Friends? Why, of course," replied Martha, sincerely.

"You want to succeed in your profession. Let me help you."

"What could you do?"

"I know the manager pretty well, for one thing. Victor Weldon is going to make a few new productions this season, and if I asked him to give you a part, he would probably do it."

"But I want to succeed on my merits," insisted Martha. "If I am to win success, I must deserve it. I should be ashamed and humiliated if I secured an engagement through influence, and then failed."

"But why refuse influence?" protested Gordon. "It gives you the opportunity, and that is something every one must have. Many a clever actor and actress is walking Broadway to-day without an engagement, simply because of lack of opportunity."

Sanford Gordon Reappears

Now, if Weldon offers you a part in his new production at the Globe Theater, you won't refuse it, will you?"

"No, I wouldn't do that," pondered Martha. "But do you think I could play a small part?"

"Of course you can, and anyhow, never give up without a trial. Weldon might even offer you the leading rôle if the part suited you."

"The leading rôle?" gasped Martha. "Impossible!"

"Not at all," continued Gordon. "I happen to know that in his new production the leading rôle is that of a simple little country girl—just the sort of ingénue you were when I first met you at French Lick. The songs are simple. In fact, it's a little play with songs—not a big musical production. Your very simplicity and naturalness would make you splendidly suited to the rôle."

"It sounds like a dream," cried Martha, wonderingly. "Are you sure Mr. Weldon

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would ever give me a trial in the part?"

Gordon came close to her. "If I ask it," he said impressively and with a queer inflection of his voice which Martha did not understand. "If I ask it, the thing is done. Come out to dinner with me and we'll talk it over."

Martha's heart sank. "I'd like to, really," she said wearily, "but I've never been out to dinner before, and Aunt Jane would be furious if I went."

"You are not responsible to—your Aunt Jane, as you call her—are you?"

"No, but—"

"There isn't any one else, is there?"

"Yes—no—that is—"

"I thought you were here alone?"

"I am alone," replied Martha, with a sudden outburst of rebellion against the conditions with which she had surrounded herself. "I am responsible to no one and can do as I please. Still—" she hesitated tearfully, "I don't think I'd better go."

Sanford Gordon Reappears

"I've got my car outside. Come up to Rector's and have a bite. I'll drive you to the theater afterwards."

"Oh, I'd love to," cried Martha. "I wonder if I dared."

"Of course. Come along."

"But I couldn't go in these clothes," exclaimed Martha. "I'd have to change—I've got a little evening frock I used to wear to dances back in Indiana. Oh, I'm sure there can be no harm, and even if Aunt Jane is angry, it will blow over by to-morrow."

"Of course. How soon will you be ready?"

"In twenty minutes."

"I'll drive over to the club and return for you. I'd wait here only these boarding-house parlors are so public. And that reminds me—you'd better move to some other place where you can have some comfort and decent surroundings."

"I'm sure this is very nice, and all I

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can afford," replied Martha, with some show of spirit.

"Oh, you can afford better quarters when Weldon engages you to-morrow," replied Gordon. "Your salary will be bigger, of course. Hurry up and change your togs. I'll wait out front in the car when I return."

Three minutes later, Martha was still standing alone in the otherwise empty parlor. Indecision was written on her face. Gordon had gone, but still she made no move toward her room and the changing of her gown. The outer door had slammed, and Flossie Forsythe entered with the usual harmonious accompaniment of the rattling chatelaines.

"Hello, Martha," cried Flossie. "Wasn't that Sanford Gordon just got in his limousine in front of the house? Came from here, too. I saw him just as I turned the corner."

"Really?" replied Martha, coldly, moving toward the door. "I suppose you

Sanford Gordon Reappears

know him better than I do," she added, as she left the room.

"Humph," murmured Flossie. "Stuck-up show-girl."

"Where's Pinkie?" inquired Mrs. Anderson, entering to light the gas. "Hasn't she returned yet?"

"Has Pinkie gone out?" inquired Flossie, munching a caramel.

"Yes. She drove off in a taxicab with some man half an hour ago. I thought he was a friend of yours."

"Pinkie drove off in a taxicab with a man?" Flossie fairly shrieked in amazement. "Will wonders never cease?"

"I couldn't see who it was," explained Aunt Jane, as the door-bell announced another visitor. "But I know it was a man."

"D'je ever hear the like of that?" Flossie shook her head wonderingly. "Seems to me I'm getting the double cross."

"Well, if it isn't Mr. Lawrence," cried Mrs. Anderson, in the hallway, ushering in a distinguished-looking individual with

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crisp, curly, dark hair, a smoothly shaven face, an elegant bearing and a far-away look in his flashing, dark eyes. "I'm so glad to welcome you home again—for you know I like to feel that all my guests are, after all, members of a happy little family."

"And glad I am to be back in your hospitable house," responded Lawrence. "What's this I see? My photograph?" he added, beaming with delight and gazing admiringly at the large photo on the piano.

"If we cannot have you, Mr. Lawrence," declared Mrs. Anderson, feelingly, "it pleases us to always have your photograph before us."

"The good lady is devoted as ever to me," thought Lawrence to himself. Aloud: "Ah, this is indeed a home for us actors, my dear Mrs. Anderson—a real home."

"This is another member of our fam-



“AND GLAD I AM TO BE BACK IN YOUR HOSPITABLE HOUSE.”

Sanford Gordon Reappears

ily," explained Aunt Jane. "Miss Flossie Forsythe, Mr. Lawrence."

"How do you do?" Lawrence curtly acknowledged the introduction.

"I seen you in Harlem once," replied Flossie, admiringly. "I recognized you at once by your photograph."

"Indeed? I believe my features are somewhat familiar to the general public."

"Oh, I'm in the profession, too," added Flossie, proudly.

"Indeed? The chorus?"

"Why, the idea—"

"For my part, I am not one of those who regard the chorus as a legitimate branch of the acting profession. It is something beyond the strict limits of our art, like the scene painter, the property master, the musician. The actor is a thing apart."

Flossie collapsed on the sofa as he disappeared into the hall with Mrs. Anderson. "Well, wouldn't that give you tonsillitis!" she ejaculated.

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The door from the hall was suddenly thrown open as though Hercules had brushed it aside as he would a fly, and Pinkie Lexington burst into the room looking like a rainbow. In place of the old, dilapidated traveling suit, she wore a smart new gown of purple velvet. A hat with a gorgeous purple plume almost concealed her face, and round her shoulders hung an elaborate set of furs. Close behind this gorgeous apparition was "Marky" Zinsheimer, a trifle nervous and ill at ease at suddenly finding so many persons around.

"Hello, everybody," cried Pinkie. "How do you like my rig?"

"Pinkie!" shouted Flossie, aghast. "Is it really you?"

"For the love of Heaven!" declared Mrs. Anderson, following her in and clasping her hands together in mute admiration.

"Stunning, by Jove!" Even Arnold

Sanford Gordon Reappears

Lawrence was moved to positive admiration.

"I'd like to see the manager who refuses me an engagement when I drag these togs into his office," cried Pinkie, proudly pirouetting to show the outfit from all sides.

"You look like ready money, my dear," gasped Flossie. "But where on earth did you get the junk?"

"Never you mind," replied Pinkie, obviously embarrassed.

"Mrs. Anderson said you went out riding in a taxi with a man," said Flossie, wonderingly. Then, as her eyes for the first time fell on Zinsheimer, who was trying to edge toward the door and escape unnoticed, she sprang to her feet, pointed her finger at the shrinking "Marky," and screamed: "With him?"

"None of your business," retorted Pinkie.

"Marky, have you been out with Pinkie?" cried Flossie. "Answer me."

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"That's the man. Certainly," declared Mrs. Anderson.

"Well, what of it?" stammered "Marky." "I just took Pinkie down to a few of the stores, and there you are."

"Oh, you cat!" cried Flossie, stamping her foot and clenching her fists. "You hypocrite!"

"Now see here, I thought you girls was friends," began Zinsheimer. "Kiss and make up, girls."

"I won't call any one names," responded Pinkie, with the air of a martyr. "She has insulted me, but I will forgive her if she apologizes. Marky, tell her to apologize."

"Never!" cried Flossie, swinging in a circle so abruptly that the rattling chate-laines shot out at an angle of forty-five degrees. "I will never speak to her again, or to you either, Marky Zinsheimer. I'm through with both of you. In all my stage career this is the crowning disappointment.

Sanford Gordon Reappears

Oh, the degradation! To be cut out by a fat blonde!"

"Marky" Zinsheimer edged toward the door.

"This," he declared, "is where Marky Zinsheimer exits smilingly."

CHAPTER IX

LOVE AND AMBITION

"AND I can't do a thing with her," concluded Aunt Jane, in her recital of Martha's shortcomings, while Clayton listened with an amused air at the story of his ward's latest adventure. "She's headstrong and unreliable, and though I love her as I would my own daughter, I think it is time for you to talk to her seriously. When a chorus girl commences to receive hundred-dollar bills and diamonds, she can't stay in my house until I know who sends them, and why. That's all. That's why I telephoned you to come right over."

"I'm glad you 'phoned me, Aunt Jane," said Clayton. "I missed a pretty important business engagement at dinner to be

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here, but I gathered from your message that something important had developed. I fancy Martha will tell us all about it. After all, it's no crime to admire Martha. I admire her myself. The change in her has been wonderful. I had no idea when I first brought her here that a few months in New York would result in such swift development."

"It's been swift all right, Mr. Clayton. I'll tell her you're here."

Clayton awaited Martha's coming with mingled emotions of pleasure and regret, pleasure at seeing her, for he had grown genuinely to like and admire her; regret, for he feared she was beginning to find her self-imposed bonds a trifle wearisome. In that case, of course, their compact would be at an end, for, though their arrangement had not contemplated any incident which would lead to a breaking of their contract, it was obvious that Martha could not expect him to ignore calmly a violation of it. His own self-respect made this

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impossible. He would have to protest, and by protesting, perhaps lose completely any influence he might have over her.

The months that had passed since he first agreed to finance Martha's venture into the realm of theatricals had been months of uneasiness. Time and again he had resolved to visit her, talk with her, find out what progress she was making; yet each time he feared he might inject too personal an interest into these inquiries. That had been their agreement: "Down with love and up with ambition." He had warned her of the wayward influences of love at a time when the possibility of caring for her himself had never entered his head. "I suppose," he had said to himself a dozen times, "she'll fall in love with some actor and marry him without even bothering to let me know." This idea first awakened the possibility that he might keenly regret such an indiscretion on her part. Then came the ardent desire to see her himself, advise her, and protect her

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from the pitfalls of her profession. But he had dismissed this as a subterfuge invented by himself as an excuse for seeing her.

"No," he had concluded. "I will stick by my bargain. I am making an experiment in character development, and I will not let my personal sentiment affect my judgment as a business man. I agreed to aid her until she can become self-supporting, or admits that she is a failure. So long as she keeps her part of the contract, I will keep mine."

Another and more powerful reason for absenting himself from all neighborhoods where he might meet her, and especially from Mrs. Anderson's boarding-house, was the fear that she might consider him in the light of a benefactor to whom she was under obligations. This galled him—to think that she might be outwardly cordial while secretly bored. For Clayton was modest enough to believe that his unassuming airs and reticent ways would

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not prove attractive to a high-spirited girl so many years his junior.

"What a surprise," cried Martha, entering the parlor suddenly. She was dressed for the street. In fact, had Clayton been a few minutes later, he would have missed her altogether, for Aunt Jane had announced his visit just in the nick of time.

"Hello," said Clayton, greeting her cordially. "What's the trouble between you and Aunt Jane?"

"Trouble?" repeated Martha. "There isn't any."

"Then what did she mean by telephoning that you were getting a bit too wild for her?"

"She dared to say that?" exclaimed Martha, indignantly. "Oh, and so she telephoned you to come and—and tame me—I suppose?"

"Not exactly that," replied Clayton, smiling. "She did 'phone me, but that was only in accordance with my instruc-

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tions. I have always felt that, as I am responsible for your being in New York, it was my duty to look after you. But that is only part of our agreement, you know. I was to advance you all the money necessary, keeping a strict account of every penny, and you in return were to take my advice, and when you became famous—repay the loan."

"When I become famous?" mused Martha, sinking onto the sofa. "I wonder if I ever will?"

"Of course," cried Clayton, encouragingly. "And I want to help you all I can."

Martha turned her large eyes toward him appealingly.

"Then why don't you come to see me oftener?" she asked softly.

"That wasn't in the agreement," smiled Clayton. "And I hardly thought you'd have any time for a mere man."

"After all you've done for me, it would be strange if I didn't *take* time for you,"

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replied Martha. Clayton shifted uneasily as she spoke.

"That sounds like 'Thank you, sir,' " he said.

"And I have to stop work sometimes, *to eat*," added Martha, maliciously, and glancing at him as though trying to convey a subtle hint. "And I hate to eat *alone*. I hate to eat dinner at Aunt Jane's *all* the time. I've wanted to go out to dinner so many times since I've been in New York, but I *never* had any one invite me, until to-day."

"Hm! That's the cause of the row with Aunt Jane?"

"She didn't like the idea."

"Some masculine admirer, of course?"

"Yes, he is," replied Martha, defiantly.

"Who is he?"

As she turned away without response, Clayton added: "Martha, who is he?"

"One you yourself introduced to me," she replied shortly.

"I?" He pondered a moment, sur-

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prised. "Not Sanford Gordon?" he said finally, and only by an effort suppressing a faint "Damn."

"Yes," declared Martha. "I am going out with him to dinner now."

"Not with my consent," declared Clayton, emphatically.

"And why not, please?"

"For many reasons," he said, sitting beside her. "Frankly, how long has this been going on?"

"About three months, if you must know," replied Martha, bristling a little at his inquisition.

"Have you seen him often?"

"To-day was the first time."

"He has written to you?"

"Yes."

"Sent you presents, I suppose?"

"A few pieces of jewelry. Every week he has sent me an envelope. Inside, with a blank piece of paper, was a hundred-dollar bill. I never knew until to-day who sent them."

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"What have you done with these things?"

"I handed them all back to him, in this room, half an hour ago. I told him I could accept nothing from him, but finally I agreed to go to dinner with him to-night. He's probably waiting out front now, in his car."

Clayton rose to his feet nervously and paced the floor.

"What else did he say?" he inquired.

"He was very nice and respectful. He offered to speak to Mr. Weldon, the manager, and get me a new part—perhaps the leading part—in his new production."

"So that's his little game, is it?" said Clayton, still more annoyed. "Money and jewels returned, his next bribe is an engagement. How do you know you could play the part?"

"I might succeed," pouted Martha. "And even a star who tries and fails, can never forget that she did star—once."

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"And so your success means more to you than anything else that life can offer?"

Martha's eyes were still fired by the light of her ambition. "Yes," she said.

"If you please, Miss," interrupted Lizzie, entering at that moment, "Mr. Gordon is outside in his car, and wants to know if you will be ready soon."

"Tell him—" began Martha. Then she hesitated, looking doubtfully at Clayton, who came close to her as though awaiting her decision on a momentous matter.

"Martha," he asked, "are you still determined to keep this dinner engagement with Gordon?"

"Why not?" Martha seemed to take a keen delight in arousing his displeasure. "There's no harm in it, and Mr. Gordon has been very kind to me."

"As he has been to the others—before you," said Clayton, bitterly, almost savagely.

"What do you mean?"

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"Never mind. If I can't convince you without blackguarding him, I'll let you go. I only ask you to trust me, and believe that I am doing my best—for you." Clayton paused doubtfully. "If you hate to eat dinner alone," he added suddenly, as an afterthought, "so do I. Martha, come with me."

"But I promised Mr. Gordon. He's waiting."

"But remember, you have a contract with me."

"Yes," replied Martha, half angrily. "With a friend. Not a jailer. Good-night."

Martha started toward the door, but Clayton raised his hand and she hesitated, as he blocked the way.

"Well?" she demanded defiantly.

"You can choose between him and me," declared Clayton, hotly. "But you've got to choose. If you go with him, breaking your contract, I wash my hands of the whole business. Now, choose."

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Martha met his gaze squarely, half angrily, half contemptuously. Then she turned to the waiting maid.

"Lizzie," she said, clearly and distinctly, "ask Mr. Gordon—" Yet, even as she spoke her voice faltered, she looked at Clayton, and added, dropping her eyes, in an almost inaudible undertone: "*—to excuse me.*"

Clayton took her arm eagerly, and she looked up again into his face.

"You brute," she said, but she laughed when she said it.

CHAPTER X

THE UNDERGROUND WIRES

THE sign on the door of Suite 1239 in the Knickerbocker Theater Building bore the legend, in plain black letters:

VICTOR WELDON Theatrical Manager

Suite 1239 was really two small rooms, an outer and an inner office. The outer office, overlooking busy Broadway, which seethed and simmered its hurrying crowds far below, was divided into two parts by a railing. On one side two long benches served as havens of rest for weary stage-folk in search of engagements. Ever and

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anon one, two, or even three players, perhaps chorus girls, perhaps actors, perhaps character women, would enter timidly, look around the office as though expecting the imperial Jove to hurl thunderbolts at them for their presumption in thus invading the sacred precincts, and then tremblingly ask the red-haired stenographer on the other side of the rail:

"Is Mr. Weldon engaging any one?"

And the red-haired stenographer, invariably without looking up from her machine, would reply:

"Nothing doing to-day."

Sometimes this routine would vary a trifle, in case Mr. Weldon, for reasons of his own, wished to have his office appear like a busy mart. Then the stenographer would say:

"Mr. Weldon is very busy now, but if you want to wait, perhaps you can see him."

This left-handed invitation, containing only the slightest ray of hope that perhaps

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the great manager would engage some one for something, was invariably pounced upon eagerly, for actors undergoing that sad daily routine known as "making the rounds," knew to their sorrow that invitations even to sit down and wait were few and far between. The "Call to-morrow" slogan was the more usual excuse in getting rid of applicants. In a profession as overcrowded as the theatrical business there are thirty applicants for every possible position, but still the unsuccessful ones keep on "making the rounds" on the chance that sooner or later they will be engaged.

Mr. Weldon's private reasons for wishing his outer office to be filled at certain times possibly had something to do with the fact that on these occasions certain smartly dressed, prosperous men called on business and were instantly admitted to the inner office. Then the stenographer, having had her cues, would drop some casual remark about "The backer of the

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new show," whereupon the professionals would become more alert at the prospect of "Something doing." Of course, conversely, the mysterious "backers" were impressed by the stage setting of an outer office of players looking for engagements from the great Mr. Weldon.

Contrary to the popular idea, based mainly on the comic weeklies, theatrical backers or "angels" are comparatively rare. Therefore, Victor Weldon's line of procedure since Mrs. Dainton had abruptly closed her American tour because of the illness of her Pomeranian pup, had been exceedingly uncertain. He had planned various productions on his own account, and he had endeavored unsuccessfully to interest certain financial gentlemen of the Wall Street district in the merits of two or three plays he had read. One of them in particular, a simple little comedy of peasant life in Germany, with two or three songs, had greatly impressed him. It was of Viennese origin, skillfully translated

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and adapted, but preserving the Viennese atmosphere and characters. Entitled "The Village Girl," the central rôle was that of a peasant girl who fell in love with a prince when the latter was hunting in disguise as a mere woodsman. Afterwards, meeting him at the state ball face to face in his gorgeous uniform, she, by renouncing her love for him because of his rank and title, ultimately led the old Emperor to relent and give his consent to their marriage.

"Good plot," murmured Weldon, after reading it in his private office. "The old stuff like this always goes with the public. There's a plot that must succeed, because it has never been known to fail. I can produce this play and make a barrel of money if I can only find a backer. I wonder if I couldn't rope Gordon in on this?"

Which explains why Sanford Gordon had already heard of the play at the time he renewed his acquaintance with Martha, and further explains the fact that three

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days later he was closeted with Weldon in the inner private office of Suite 1239 in the Knickerbocker Theater Building.

"It will cost about twenty thousand cold, before we ring up the curtain," explained Weldon, skillfully calculating with the aid of a pencil and a pad of paper. "It will take about seven thousand for the production, including costumes and uniforms. Everything is Viennese this season, so we must get the correct atmosphere. Advertising and printing may take up two or three thousand more, and then we'll probably have to guarantee at least twenty-five hundred to the theater we select. I'd like to get a classy theater like the Globe, where they have ushers in English military uniforms, and society people always go there because some one tipped them off that it was *the* society theater of New York. But it might take a little more money to get the Globe."

"Get the Globe by all means," said Gordon. "A few thousand more or less mean

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nothing if the thing is a hit, and if it is a failure, I guess I can stand the loss quite as well."

Victor Weldon sprang to his feet excitedly. The "roping in" had been easier than he anticipated, for Sanford Gordon, in spite of his propensity for squandering wealth in certain directions, belonged to the category of "wise people." No one ever wasted postage to send him green-goods catalogues, and Weldon had been extremely doubtful of his ability to get Gordon as a backer, although, of course, he had enjoyed unlimited opportunities to win his confidence while acting as Mrs. Dainton's manager.

"It's the chance of a lifetime," Weldon thought to himself as he clasped Gordon's hand to bind the bargain.

"I'll have the necessary legal papers drawn up by my lawyer," explained Gordon. "The money will be deposited with the Commercial Trust Company to-morrow morning. You will handle this pro-

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duction exactly as though it is your own—with one exception, my dear Weldon.”

“What is that?” asked Weldon, apprehensively.

“You will engage for the leading rôle a young lady I will designate—”

“Ah, now I understand—” began Weldon, smiling.

“—who will have no inkling whatever of the fact that I am the backer of this show. In fact, no one must know that I am furnishing the money. Furthermore, at any time I see fit—if, for instance, the young lady cannot, in my judgment, play the part satisfactorily—I reserve the right to stop the whole production *instantly*, merely paying the necessary bills. Do you understand?”

“But you wouldn’t close the show if it’s a hit, would you?” demanded Weldon.

“I’m not likely to close the show at all,” he laughed. “But I have reasons of my own for reserving that right. Otherwise, however, you are the manager, owner,

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producer and director. Do as you please, my dear Weldon, but remember the terms of our compact."

"I am not likely to forget them," cried Weldon, enthusiastically. "But," he added nervously, "can the young lady you wish me to engage really act the part?"

"I don't know and I don't care," responded Gordon. "The fact remains that she is going to play the part, and if she doesn't know how to act, teach her. That's all."

Weldon shook his head sadly.

"I had hoped, after my experience, Mr. Gordon, that I was through with those bloomers where they try to force an unknown on the public," he sighed. "But I know you too well to try and argue that a well-known actress of reputation would help the piece and perhaps make it a hit."

Gordon picked up his silk hat and balanced it with one hand while he took his cane and gloves from the desk.

"It is immaterial to me, Weldon,

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whether the piece is a hit or not," he said carelessly. "Of course, I sincerely hope, for your sake, that it proves a success. But I won't shed any tears if it isn't. Like the respected founders of the New Theater, I am not producing this play to make money. I am simply endeavoring to give a certain young lady a chance to play a star part in a Broadway theater. If she has the merit to succeed, so much the better, for her sake and for yours. But personally I don't give a damn—so long as I pull the strings."

CHAPTER XI

IN THE GREEN-ROOM

TIME: Three months later.

"Half hour! Half hour!"

The resonant cry of the call-boy, making the rounds of the dressing-rooms of the Globe Theater, penetrated to the great empty green-room, immediately adjoining the star's dressing-room. Downstairs, from the musicians' room, came the sounds of the scraping of violin bows across the strings, the occasional toot of the French horn or the preliminary notes from a flute. Through the green-baize doors leading to the stage came the sounds of shifting scenery as the stage hands set the first act of "The Village Maid." A curtain was half drawn across the entrance to the adjoining

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star's room, behind which the faithful Lizzie of the boarding-house, now transformed into a real maid for an actress, was busily engaged preparing the toilette articles and the costumes of Miss Martha Farnum, actress.

Messenger boy 735, his diminutive figure almost hidden beneath a gigantic box of flowers, was escorted through the baize doors by old Pete, the back-door watchman.

"Put 'em down there, sonny," directed Pete, pointing toward a couch in the green-room. "And then vamoose quick. I got to watch the door, 'cause Miss Farnum ain't come in yet."

Number 735 deposited the flowers as directed, carefully cut the strings, opened the box, and was in the act of breaking off a fine American Beauty when Lizzie fortunately caught sight of him from the dressing-room.

"Here, you thief. Don't you dare," she cried.

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"I only wanted one, lady," replied 735.
"Gee, if I was an actress with all them blooms, I'd be glad to slip one of them to a kid who's going to sit up in the gallery and applaud your old show."

"Are you going to see the play?" asked Lizzie.

"Betcher life. A man give me a ticket and four bits to sit in the gallery and clap everything."

"What—everything?" queried Lizzie.

"Well, everything our leader does. There's forty of us kids, all got gallery tickets free and fifty cents on the side. And say, when Miss Farnum comes on the stage, you bet she'll hear us yell. We got orders to raise de roof den."

"You awful boy," cried Lizzie, genuinely shocked. "Here, take the rose, but don't tell any one about your free tickets. Miss Farnum won't care to have any one know the audience is paid to clap her."

"Aw, quit kidding me," responded 735, moving toward the stage. "Why, we sees

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'most all the New York shows that way for nothing. We get paid to clap, even if the show's rotten. Don't try to kid me, baby.'

"It's wonderful what you learn when you go on the stage," murmured the horrified Lizzie, after she had chased 735 into the darker regions of the stage. "I wonder what's keeping Miss Farnum?" she added thoughtfully, as she returned to the dressing-room.

Weldon, clad in immaculate evening clothes, and accompanied by an unobtrusive young chap wearing a dinner coat, a gray vest, a gray tie and a small derby, strolled back behind the scenes to make sure everything was all right for the opening. This was really Weldon's most ambitious attempt. For years he had served in a business capacity with many stars, and occasionally he had produced things on his own account, but never before had his bank-roll assumed proportions which would justify him in leasing the exclusive

In the Green-Room

Globe Theater. If the new production made good it would be the making of him as a manager as well. Consequently he was in delightful spirits.

His companion was a trifle more subdued, for upon his somewhat boyish face there was a cloud of anxiety. He was keen, alert, almost deferential in his attitude toward the manager, but a certain experienced air suggested that behind his youthful appearance there was dynamic energy and a fund of vitality which might burst forth at any moment. He was Phil Hummer, the press agent of the Globe Theater, a former newspaper man who, as he often expressed it, "quit writing for the papers because he found he could make more money as a press agent." For weeks he had been assiduously informing the public, through such newspaper mediums as he could persuade to print his effusions, of the importance of Miss Martha Farnum's approaching stellar début—for in

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the new play, be it known, Martha was being "starred."

A Broadway star! How often have you read of the wonderful luck of some obscure chorus girl, called upon in an emergency to play the leading rôle, and next day proclaimed a star! Pretty fiction it is. Once in a while it happens in real life, but very seldom. It is the alluring tales of the sudden elevation of choristers which attract and fascinate the beginner. The oft-told story of how Edna May rose from the ranks and became a Casino star overnight, has served as the guiding beacon in the life story of many a chorus girl seeking for fame; alas! too often in vain.

"Ready to-night for the stellar début of Miss Martha Farnum," cried Weldon, enthusiastically. "To-night is the night that wins or loses all."

In clear defiance of the printed rules of the Fire Department young Mr. Hummer carefully lighted a cigarette and observed

In the Green-Room

carelessly: "Can't see how any one loses unless it's Miss Farnum."

"Not lose?" repeated Weldon. "Why, man, haven't I rented the theater for six weeks on a guarantee, to say nothing of engaging the company and paying for the most expensive scenic production of the season? With a new Paris gown for every act? If Miss Farnum doesn't make good, where am I?"

"Exactly where you were three months ago," said Hummer.

"Nothing of the sort—" began Weldon, when Hummer, with a warning gesture, held his finger to his lips and nodded toward the dressing-room where Lizzie was preparing for the coming of her mistress.

"Cut it, Weldon," he whispered meaningly. "I know it's not your money, so what's the use?"

"Not my money? Don't I pay you your salary?"

"Certainly; but I know, and every one

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else in the company guesses, that you are only the figurehead."

"The idea!" sputtered Weldon, pompously. "Don't the bills read: 'Victor Weldon presents Miss Farnum'?—*presents*, mind you."

Hummer stepped closer a bit, puffed at his cigarette, and motioned toward the dressing-room.

"She's the meal ticket," he added.

"You mean Miss Farnum?"

"Exactly. She found the angel, not you. If he withdrew his support to-night, you couldn't keep this thing going thirty minutes."

Weldon dropped into a chair and asked weakly:

"How did you find out?"

"The day you engaged me to incite public interest in your star, I found out who the angel was. I hadn't been hanging around the Casino for nothing. Half a dozen of the newspaper boys know all about his infatuation for her."

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Victor Weldon smiled weakly. "Every one said you were good at guessing things," he remarked. "But listen, Phil. Not a word of this to any one. Even Miss Farnum doesn't know how things really stand."

Hummer whistled.

"She don't know Gordon is putting up the money?"

Weldon shook his head.

"And she thinks it is honest recognition of real merit?"

Weldon said nothing.

"My word, what a good story, and I can't print it," ejaculated Hummer, turning toward the door that led behind the boxes to the front of the house. Just as he was about to open it, Gordon pushed it ajar with one quick stroke of his powerful arm, and strode into the green-room.

"Where's Miss Farnum?" he asked brusquely. "Oh, I thought you were Weldon," he added, turning abruptly from Hummer.

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"This is Mr. Hummer, our press representative," explained Weldon, coming forward eagerly.

"Ah, the press agent? Very good," responded Gordon, carelessly turning his back on Hummer.

"Let us say, rather, inciter of public interest," explained Hummer. "Paid to get fiction into the papers, and to suppress facts."

Gordon turned toward him curiously. "Indeed! And what do you suppress?" he asked.

"Well," drawled Hummer, "who is furnishing the money for Miss Farnum's starring venture, for one thing, especially as she doesn't know herself." And with a light laugh Hummer went "in front" by the passage leading behind the boxes.

"See here, Weldon," said Gordon, decisively, "it is now almost eight o'clock. When do you ring up the curtain?"

"At twenty minutes past," replied Weldon.

In the Green-Room

"Then understand me thoroughly. You will not ring up that curtain until I say so. Understand me—*until I say so.*"

Gordon's tone clearly indicated something unusual. "What do you mean?" asked Weldon.

"Unless things go my way first, that curtain will never go up on this production," said Gordon, tensely. "Oh, don't worry," as he saw the other's face wrinkle. "I'll see that you personally don't lose anything by it. But if I am to pay the piper for this crazy starring scheme, I want some return for my money. Have the orchestra ring in as usual and play the overture. Have all the people ready in their costumes, and then, just before Martha Farnum steps upon that stage, I want to see her here. Do you understand?"

"I didn't before," answered Weldon, meaningly, "but I am just beginning to now."

Alone, Gordon clenched his hands nervously.

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"I've given her everything she has wanted for the past three months," he murmured, "even this latest plaything—a theater and a company of her own—but I think we'll have a settlement to-night, my dear Martha; a little clearer understanding before the curtain rises on my latest folly."

CHAPTER XII

AN OVERTURE AND A PRELUDE

"THIS," said Martha, "is as far as you can venture. There is my dressing-room, sacred only to the star—that's Poor Little Me."

And with a profound courtesy, she bowed low before Clayton. Then rising with the air of a tragedy queen, she pointed toward the door.

"Begone, varlet!" she cried, with mock intensity. "Your queen dismisses you."

Clayton laughed. "So little Martha Farnum has become a great New York star at last," he said seriously. "I couldn't realize that you were really going up so rapidly. This offer from Weldon was really enough to take your breath away,

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and when he decided during rehearsals to feature you so prominently, I concluded that perhaps you had more talent than either of us ever suspected. But when he actually starred you—say, did you see your name in electric letters as we came by the front of the theater?”

“Yes,” cried Martha. “It almost took my breath away.”

Clayton shook his head wonderingly.

“I remember your telling me Gordon offered to get you this engagement,” he said. “Do you suppose—”

Martha laughed at his half-uttered thought.

“Mr. Gordon has had nothing to do with it,” she declared. “I am sure of that, because he never came to one of the rehearsals. Once I saw some one out front in the darkened theater who seemed like Mr. Gordon, but when I asked him if he had attended the rehearsal he declared I was mistaken.”

“But you’ve seen him?”

An Overture and a Prelude

"Yes, a number of times, and since you withdrew your restrictions, I have had dinner with him frequently, but you know all about that."

"I couldn't expect you to be cooped up all the time," Clayton admitted, "especially when your salary leaped upward so amazingly. And I don't blame you for taking a more comfortable apartment in the Webster. Aunt Jane's boarding-house was all right for the chorus girl, but a trifle too *passé* for the future star."

Martha shook her head sadly. "I think I was happier in those days than now," she mused. "The more one attempts, the greater the chance for failure. To-night I realize what is the ambition of most players, yet, somehow, I am filled with dread. It doesn't seem right that I, plain Martha Farnum, should be rushed upward like a skyrocket. Though the rocket shoots upward in a blaze of glory, the stick must fall."

"Good heavens, you mustn't anticipate

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bad luck," protested Clayton, cheerily. "I'm going out front and witness your triumph."

"If it only is a triumph!" sighed Martha.

"It will be," insisted Clayton. "However, don't be nervous. Remember if you ever need me, I will be within call. *Au revoir*—and good luck to you," he added cordially, and in another moment he had gone, while Martha stood staring blankly before her, and wondering what the night would bring forth.

"Oh, Miss Farnum," cried Lizzie, suddenly emerging from the dressing-room, "you'd better hurry and dress for the first act. It is almost time for the overture."

"All right, Lizzie," answered Martha, going to the room and beginning to disrobe. A moment later, Miss Pinkie Lexington, made up for the part of a fashionable society woman, entered the green-room cautiously, and crossed to the door behind the boxes.

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"Where can he be?" she murmured to herself. Then, hearing the call-boy crying "Overture, overture," in the distance, she started quickly toward the stage, only to pause abruptly when she found herself face to face with Miss Flossie Forsythe, neatly attired in a maid's costume, and wearing a white apron and cap.

"Oh, I wouldn't have come here, if I'd known you was here," declared Flossie, angrily.

Pinkie extended a conciliating hand and said grandly: "Let's be friends, Flossie. A girl shouldn't have enemies in the company."

"It is hard enough to be compelled to accept an engagement in the same company with you," replied Flossie, sarcastically, "but thank goodness, a girl can choose her own friends."

"It's the first part you ever had with real lines, isn't it?"

"No," cried Flossie, indignantly. "I

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had lines when I was with the 'Follies' on the New York roof."

"Oh, but I mean in a real play," replied Pinkie, superciliously. "Anyhow, you don't want to get too gay with me. Remember, I got you this engagement. I asked Martha to give you a real part, because I knew you needed the money, now you've lost your lawsuit, and Mr. Zinsheimer, too."

"Zinsheimer!" repeated a stentorian voice behind them, as the proud possessor of that historic name appeared, gorgeous in the resplendency of an expansive shirt bosom and a white carnation in his button-hole. "Now, Pinkie, you know I told you to call me 'Feathers.'"

"Oh, Mr. Zinsheimer," half sobbed Flossie, "you are just in time. Even though you care nothing more for me, you are too much of a gentleman to let me be insulted. This *creature* has—"

"Nothing of the kind, Feathers," interrupted Pinkie. "Flossie's still sore on me."

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I say, she'd better forget it. Girls ought to be friends when they're in the same company."

Zinsheimer raised his hands protestingly. "Aw, girls, cut it out, cut it out. People these days have to be important to have enemies. Forget it. There's a great audience out in front and all of them waiting to see the little star. Ach Gott!" he added, as the green-baize doors were suddenly thrown open from the stage, and an excitable whirlwind blew in. "Ach Gott, what is this?"

"This" turned out to be an imposing figure attired in the white huzzar uniform of a German prince. His bronze wig with the pompadour effect, his upturned moustache, his glittering decorations and smart uniform, all indicated that he was a Great Personage. But, alas! from the knees downward the illusion stopped. "This" didn't wear any boots. In fact, he was in his stocking feet, and he trod the boards gingerly but none the less dramatically.

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"This," in other words, was Arnold Lawrence, leading man, and he was evidently somewhat *distract*.

"Miss Farnum," he cried. "Where is Miss Farnum?"

"She's there in her dressing-room," explained Zinsheimer. "But she isn't coming out until—well, until she's more so than she is now. What's the matter?"

"That stupid bootmaker has failed to send my boots," shouted Lawrence. "How can I go on without my boots? I have the part of a royal prince of the German Empire. Do you expect me to appear like this—without boots?"

"Go ask the property man," directed Zinsheimer. "He's got some."

"Bah! A German prince wear property boots? Impossible!"

Martha, all ready for the first act, appeared in the door of her dressing-room.

"Miss Farnum," cried Lawrence, dramatically, "my boots have not arrived. I refuse to go on unless correctly dressed."



"MY BOOTS HAVE NOT ARRIVED, I REFUSE TO GO ON UNLESS CORRECTLY DRESSED."

An Overture and a Prelude

"But what can I do?" asked Martha, helplessly.

"Dismiss the audience. I will not appear without the proper costume."

"Oh, dear—please—"

"I will not act."

"But we can get some other boots—"

"I tell you, I will not act."

"For my sake—for the company's sake—"

"I must think first of my art," almost shouted Lawrence. "The critics are in front. If they saw me in boots not in keeping with the costume, they would say I dressed the part wrongly. I would be ruined."

Zinsheimer dragged the frantic leading man to one side. "Come here," he cried. "She's got enough to worry her to-night without you. Now, do you want the German prince to appear with a black eye?"

"But heavens, man, what am I to do?" protested Lawrence. "Look at me. I want my boots."

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"Aw, go act barefooted," replied Zinsheimer, disgustedly.

"What? I barefoot?"

"Well, why not? You haven't got anything on Ruth and Isadora. If they can act barefooted, why not you?"

"Preposterous!" exploded Lawrence, seeing he was being made game of. "I tell you, I decline to act. It is the audience who suffers—not I."

Fortunately Weldon entered at this psychological moment with the package which had been delayed. The boots had been sent to the box-office instead of the stage entrance. Lawrence, calmed at once as if by magic, pounced upon it with a sigh of relief.

"My boots—at last," he cried. "It is all right, Miss Farnum. They have arrived. I will act to-night."

In the general laughter that ensued, came the sharp cry of the assistant stage manager calling "Places—first act." As Martha stepped toward the stage, half

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trembling with mingled nervousness and glad anticipation at the actual realization of her much cherished ambition, Weldon touched her on the arm.

"One moment, if you please, Miss Farnum," he said softly. "Believe me, I regret to trouble you, but something very important has arisen. Mr. Gordon wants to speak to you here."

Martha turned toward him in surprise. "Mr. Gordon?" she repeated. "How absurd! I can't see any one now."

"He's very insistent, Miss Farnum."

"Then tell him, after the play," replied Martha. "He must know the curtain is just about to rise on the first act."

"He knows that," responded Weldon, sincerely sorry at the awkward predicament in which he saw things were becoming involved. "I know that, but please, for my sake, see him, if only for a few moments."

"That's a strange request," pondered Martha. "But if you really want it, Mr.

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Weldon, of course I will comply. You have done so much for me that indeed I ought to."

"I will send him here at once," said Weldon, quickly, and disappeared through the boxes.

"Gordon?" said Martha, wonderingly to herself. Then to her maid: "Lizzie, go and watch for my entrance."

CHAPTER XIII

BEFORE THE CURTAIN ROSE

GORDON stopped short before Martha, involuntarily impressed at the pleasing picture she made, clad in her simple but effective first-act dress, as she half kneeled on the ottoman in the center of the green-room, repeating to herself the lines from her part, which she held in her hand and at which she occasionally glanced to refresh her memory.

"You are indeed beautiful to-night," he half whispered, approaching her closer. Martha turned toward him coldly.

"Did you force yourself upon me this way just to utter such a commonplace remark as that?" she asked.

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"Force myself?" repeated Gordon, half indignantly.

"Yes. You know that I am nervous and excited over this performance to-night. In a few moments I will have to face an unsympathetic audience, ready to laugh if I score a failure, reluctant to concede success. At such a time, how can you imagine I want to talk to any one? All my strength and energy are needed for this conflict to-night, and it was unkind of you to insist upon coming here at this moment."

Gordon drew a chair near the ottoman and motioned for her to be seated. Martha reluctantly sat beside him, her thoughts far away, her ears listening intently for the curtain music to indicate the beginning of the first act.

"If you had refused to see me just now," said Gordon, quietly but incisively, "the curtain would never have risen to-night. In fact, I am not sure now that it will rise."

Martha looked at him in simple amaze-



MARTHA FARNUM (ELSIE JANIS)



Before the Curtain Rose

ment. "Nonsense," she replied. "The curtain will rise in a few minutes."

"It will when you say the word, provided it suits me also."

"What do you mean?" Martha's voice expressed curiosity only.

"The time is short, so I will speak plainly," said Gordon, tensely. "I have purposely waited until the last moment so you could see both sides of the picture. On the one hand, here are you, Martha Farnum, about to make your actual appearance as a star at a Broadway theater. In six months or less you have been transformed from a simple country girl to a position often denied those who struggle for many years. Who do you think has accomplished all this for you? Who is making you a star to-night?"

"Why—why, Mr. Weldon, of course," replied Martha, slightly bewildered. "Who else?"

Gordon laughed with just the suggestion of a sneer.

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"I am," he said coldly.

"You? Impossible!" Martha rose in amazement.

"For three months I have made it possible for you to have everything a woman can want," continued Gordon, calmly, coming to her. "To-night the climax is reached when you make your appearance as a star—if you appear. While you have thought your natural talents were receiving just recognition, I have been paying the bills."

"And if what you say is true—all true—what then?" Martha gazed at him blankly, as though dazed.

"This. What I have done, I have done because of my admiration for you. Up to this moment I have asked nothing in return, but now I do."

"Return? You mean—?"

"You're not such a fool as you'd have me think. What of the handsome apartment you are living in, furnished by Mr. Weldon and supposed to be paid for out

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of the salary you are to receive? Do you think Mr. Weldon really paid the rent? No, my dear. I did."

"No, no, no—I don't believe it," cried Martha, shrinking from him. "It's incredible."

"I don't care a rap for the money I have spent," cried Gordon, following her. "I'd give it ten times over if you only loved me."

"Loved you?" repeated Martha, scornfully. "How can you—"

"Don't say no too hastily, Martha. I think I care more for you than I ever did for any one else. I'll make you happy. There's nothing that my money won't do or can't do. We can go around the world together—to Paris, Vienna, India, Japan, anywhere you like." He came nearer. "Martha, in all the time I have known and loved you, I have never had one kiss. Shall I have the first to-night?"

The girl turned and faced him squarely with flashing eyes.

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"Neither to-night nor any other night," she cried in ringing tones.

"You mean it?" Gordon's face was pale and drawn.

"Yes."

"Is that your final answer?" he asked, after a pause.

"It is," she replied defiantly.

"Then listen to me," declared Gordon, his face flushed with sudden anger. "Either you pledge your word to accept me on my own terms here and now, or you will never make your entrance on that stage. Ah," he added, as Martha reeled at the sudden realization of how completely he controlled the situation, "that hits your vanity, does it? A nice little story for the newspapers to-morrow. Theater closed, audience dismissed, new star such a pitiful failure that she is too frightened to appear."

"But that isn't true—that isn't true," cried Martha.

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"Isn't it? Try and convince the public otherwise."

"I will, and that curtain shall go up to-night." Martha faced him bravely enough, though her courage almost failed her.

"Try it and see whose orders will be obeyed. Listen—the orchestra has finished the overture. Think carefully, for your final answer now decides your fate. You are at the parting of the ways. A future with me, everything you desire, or back to your days of poverty."

Weldon appeared as Martha seemed to hesitate.

"Shall I ring up the curtain?" he asked quietly.

"Wait," replied Gordon. He turned to Martha. "Your answer?"

Martha did not look at him. "No," she replied simply.

Gordon drew in his breath quickly, and the concentrated anger seemed almost ready to burst its bonds. He stood look-

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ing at her intently for a moment, then apparently realizing that he was unable to alter her decision, he threw up his hands with a despairing gesture and started toward the door.

"There will be no performance, Weldon," he said roughly. "Dismiss the audience, pay everybody their salaries, and wind up the whole cursed business. I have sunk twenty thousand dollars for a hobby and a pretty face, but now, thank God, I'm through. I'm cured. That's all—good-night."

"One moment before you go," cried Martha, stung to the quick. "You may have dazzled other girls before with your golden shower. You may have rung up curtains on success, and claimed your reckoning, but this time, even though you have brought me failure and humiliation, you may mark one failure for yourself. Good-night." And with a proud gesture of independence, she turned her back upon him, and went into her dressing-room, while

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Gordon, with a muttered exclamation, left the green-room for the front of the theater.

As quickly as possible the despairing Weldon gave the necessary orders. The moment the players understood there would be no performance, pandemonium broke loose. In an instant the green-room was filled with a crowd of excited players in oddly contrasting costumes, all chattering away for dear life.

"No performance?" cried Flossie Forsythe. "What does it all mean?"

"Ain't I ever going to play a real part?" wailed Pinkie.

"My first time on Broadway, too," said Arthur Mortimer, sadly.

"I never heard of such an outrageous proceeding," shouted Arnold Lawrence, pompously. "No performance, indeed? I was engaged for the season, and I shall sue for a season's salary."

"You were engaged for the run of the play," retorted Weldon, indignantly. "If

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the play doesn't have a run you are entitled to nothing, but I give you and every one else two weeks' salary."

"It is an insult to an artist," insisted Lawrence, turning to a group of the dissatisfied and disappointed players.

Suddenly the door through the boxes was thrown open and Clayton entered.

"What does it all mean?" he demanded. "The theater is crowded with a lot of people who want to know the reason for the sudden announcement. Why will there be no performance?" he added, drawing Weldon aside.

"I had to do it, Mr. Clayton," explained Weldon, privately. "You see it is not my production—I had to obey the orders of my financial backer."

"You mean—"

"Gordon. Yes."

"I see. Affairs came to a climax to-night," said Clayton. "I suspected something underhanded, but I didn't believe even Gordon capable of such a trick." He

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paused an instant. "Look here, Weldon, is this theater leased in your name?"

"Certainly," replied Weldon, promptly.

"Then you could give the performance if you wanted to?"

"But Mr. Gordon will not pay the bills unless I carry out his orders," protested Weldon.

Clayton slapped him eagerly on the back. "Then carry out my orders," he cried enthusiastically, "and I will pay the bills."

"You?" Weldon's eyes lit up with renewed interest. He saw before him another prospective backer to take the place of the one who had just deserted him. "You? Of course it *could* be done, Clayton, the lease is in my name."

"Then that's settled," declared Clayton, quickly. "You know me and you know my checks are good. Quick—send some one out to make an announcement to the audience that there *will* be a performance."

As the stage manager hurriedly started

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toward the curtain, Lawrence, who had overheard this dialogue, strutted toward Clayton.

"All very good," he cried pompously. "But what about my salary?"

"How much do you get?" inquired Clayton.

Lawrence came close to him. "Four hundred a week," he whispered.

Clayton turned to Weldon. "How much does this man get, Weldon?" he inquired.

"Seventy a week," Weldon answered quickly.

Lawrence fairly fumed with rage, while the members of the company tittered.

"The terms of my contract are sacred and confidential," he protested. "I accepted the reduced salary only because it is late in the season. You had no right to expose the secrets of our contract."

Clayton laughed. "I'll give you a hundred if you go on and give a good performance," he volunteered. "Weldon,

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make out the salary list of this company, and I'll give you a check covering two weeks' salaries for each member of the organization. Figure up how much the theater costs, and whatever Gordon hasn't paid, I will. Now, everybody get ready for the first act, and ring up the curtain."

Martha, alone in her dressing-room, had heard Clayton giving his peremptory commands. Half dazed yet at the sudden apparent collapse of the play, she scarcely realized that defeat was even now being turned into victory. But the command to get ready for the act awoke her from her lethargy.

"Mr. Clayton," she cried, coming to him, "how can you do all this?"

"I'm not as rich as Gordon," he replied, looking at her a bit reproachfully. "Not by a long shot, but I guess you can star for a night anyway, Martha, even with a one-horse angel."

"You are not doing all this for me? Why, it would be better to let the whole

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thing be a total failure than to take such a risk."

"I am doing it because it pleases me," explained Clayton. "And because I want you to have every chance for success that they tried to rob you of."

"Just wish me luck?" asked Martha, softly, holding out her hand.

"I wish you everything you wish yourself," he replied.

"The curtain is up, Miss Farnum," cried Lizzie, entering for a moment from the stage. "It is nearly time for your entrance."

"Wish me success," pleaded Martha, again.

"Is that all you wish for?" asked Clayton, going with her toward the stage. "If that is all you wish, I hope from the bottom of my heart you will win it to-night."

Martha withdrew her hand, turned, and half smiled, just before stepping upon the stage.

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"I wonder if it is?" she said wistfully, and in another moment Clayton heard a roll of applause go over the house as she stepped before the footlights.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MORNING AFTER

WHITE and gold were the decorations of Martha's apartment in the Webster—all white and gold except the dainty bedroom, which was in pink. Visitors, however, saw only the white and gold of the parlor and the drawing-room, with perhaps an occasional glimpse into the dark-oak dining-room.

The first streaks of early dawn, penetrating the crevices behind the heavy, drawn curtains, cast a few shadows, and in the dim light one might have seen a dozen baskets of flowers, mostly orchids and roses, ranged about the drawing-room.

It must have been almost nine o'clock when Lizzie, entering from the maid's

A Star for a Night

room, drew the curtains and flooded the white and gold parlor with rich, warm sunlight. The curtains of the bedroom were still drawn, but evidently Martha was wide awake, for a voice called from the inner room.

"Is that you, Lizzie?"

"Yes, Miss Martha," replied the maid. "It's 'most nine o'clock. Shall I get you the papers?"

Martha, hastily throwing on a pink dressing-gown, entered the parlor. Her eyes were still heavy, and her face was drawn and troubled.

"I've had a wretched night," she said, dropping into a great arm-chair. "I couldn't sleep. After that terrible ordeal—"

"Terrible?" repeated Lizzie, aghast. "Lord, Miss, I heard all the stage hands say the show was great. The actors are the only ones I heard roast it at all."

"I'm afraid I made a terrible mistake," sighed Martha. "I tried to do things too

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quickly. I was ambitious, but I forgot that the race is not always to the swift. I should have spent years and years in preparation before attempting last night. Of course I was misled by the management, who made me believe I was being promoted because of my ability."

"And wasn't that the truth?" demanded Lizzie.

Martha smiled wanly. "I can't explain now," she said. "I know I never realized until after last night what an absolute failure I had been."

"Oh, don't say that, Miss Martha," protested Lizzie. "Look at the applause you got, and all these flowers."

"Applause and flowers—that's all failures ever get," and Martha shook her head wearily. "The end of my dreams has come. I shall close the theater to-night."

"Lord, Miss Martha," cried Lizzie, "don't be hasty. Ah," as a knock sounded

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on the door, "there are the papers. Shall I open them up for you?"

"I can find the notices easily enough," said Martha, taking the papers. "I am sure the horrid headlines will stare me in the face. Mr. Clayton tried to encourage me last night, but I am sure the verdict will be against me."

"I wouldn't bother with the papers if I felt that way, Miss Martha. Lots of the actors at Mrs. Anderson's said they never read no criticisms, but once in a great while when an actor got a good line, I always noticed he'd find a way to read it aloud at the supper table."

"By the way, Lizzie," said Martha, suddenly, "is Mrs. Anderson's full now, do you suppose?"

"It wasn't yesterday."

"Do you suppose I could get my old room again?"

"Your old room?" cried the amazed Lizzie. "Why, that's no place for a real actress."

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Martha sighed again and tried to smile. "But I'm not a real actress and I must find a cheaper place. Pack up to-day. Better 'phone the hotel office at once that we shall leave in an hour."

Lizzie went to the 'phone while Martha opened the newspapers. She turned the pages idly until she found the headlines she sought, and for a moment read in silence. Suddenly she sprang to her feet and threw the papers on the floor.

"Infamous," she cried bitterly. "Why need they be so cruel? I won't read another line."

At that moment there was a knock at the door, and Pinkie, resplendent in a new tailor-made gown, brilliantly red, burst into the room.

"Just rushed in to tell you how perfectly grand you were last night, and what perfectly lovely things the papers said about me," she cried. "Of course, that smart critic on the *American* might have said I

had improved a little, but then he said I was just as artistic when playing lines as when I was only in the sextette. Nice, wasn't it?"

Martha smiled. "What did the *Journal* say?" she asked.

"Oh, something nice—I don't quite remember," evaded Pinkie.

"And the *Herald*?"

"Success!" cried Pinkie. "But I think it's a shame what some of them said about you, Martha. It isn't so at all."

"Never mind, dear," said Martha, somewhat wearily. "We did the best we could."

"The trouble was the play was bad," continued Pinkie. "Don't know what that author meant by putting me only in one act, and then letting Flossie come on twice to interrupt my scenes. But come along, Martha—you must put some powder on that nose if you expect to live through another day. I'll help you dress."



"THIS IS INFAMOUS, INFAMOUS! I WON'T READ ANOTHER LINE."

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Half an hour later, as Martha had almost completed her toilette, Lizzie interrupted to say that the hotel clerk wanted to send some one up to look at the apartment—a newly married couple. Would it disturb Miss Farnum? If so, they would make the couple call again.

“Certainly not,” replied Martha. “Show them around yourself. I’ll be ready to leave in a few minutes.”

Some three minutes later, Mr. “Marky” Zinsheimer and his bride, formerly Miss Flossie Forsythe, were ushered into the white and gold apartment, entirely ignorant of the fact that it was occupied by Miss Farnum. Mr. and Mrs. Zinsheimer having been married a little more than one hour, were already looking for a dove-cote for their honeymoon.

“This might suit us all right—” began Zinsheimer, when Flossie interrupted him with a shriek.

“Bless my soul, if it ain’t Lizzie,” shrieked Flossie.

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"Lizzie?" repeated Zinsheimer. "What are you doing here?"

"Why, this is Miss Farnum's apartment," explained the maid. "I'll tell her you're here, Miss Forsythe—"

"Mrs. Zinsheimer, if you please," responded that young lady, haughtily. "We were married this morning."

"Fact," admitted Zinsheimer. "I always liked you best, Flossie, until you got mad at me because I helped Pinkie, but when I saw you playing the demure little maid last night, with Pinkie lording it all over you, and you never answering back, I said: 'There's the girl for me.' So I waited at the stage door, and when you came out I grabbed you and we sat up so late at Jack's that it was morning before we finished talking things over. So then there was only one thing to do—get married."

"Sure, you both look happy," said Lizzie.

"And we are happy, aren't we, Marky?"

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cried Flossie. "I'm going to give up the stage for good and all."

"You can have this apartment in an hour," said Lizzie. "Miss Farnum is giving it up because it's too expensive."

"Too expensive for her, eh?" smiled Zinsheimer; then he added confidentially: "I know lots of people who would consider it an honor to be allowed to pay her rent."

"Marky," cried Flossie, warningly. "Remember you are a married man now."

"Marky," to conciliate his bride, took her in his arms and kissed her. At this psychological moment, Miss Pinkie Lexington emerged from the boudoir. She shrieked at the sight.

"Marky," she cried. "You here with Flossie?"

Flossie proudly drew Zinsheimer far from the possibility of contact with Miss Lexington, and proudly, almost haughtily, threw a defiant look at her rival.

"My *husband*, Mr. Zinsheimer," she said.

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Pinkie, with a scream, sank upon the big arm-chair and rocked herself to and fro. "They are married," she moaned. "They are married."

"This morning, dear," smiled Flossie, coldly. "Thanks so much for your congratulations."

"Married," repeated Pinkie, incredulously. "Married."

Zinsheimer advanced cautiously, and gave her several encouraging pats on the shoulder.

"There, now, don't take on so," he said suavely. "There's other fish in the sea, almost as good. It isn't half as bad as what they say in the papers about the play. Listen to this," he added, unfolding a newspaper and reading: "'A luridly ludicrous exhibition of maudlin mush.' Ach Gott, what you think of that? 'A misguided author loaded a thirteen-inch gun to the muzzle with idiotic words and reduced a large and long-suffering audience to a peppered wreck. As an author, he's

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a joke. As a murderer, he has the punch.' What funny fellows those critics are. Here's what he says about Miss Farnum: 'The star—who, by the way, could only be observed with the aid of a Lick telescope—was only a shooting star. She made one faint, fantastic fizzle, then dropped without even a hiss into the gloom of merciful oblivion. She was not even a meteor, and only an innate sense of delicacy prevents our calling her a devil-chaser.' No wonder the ladies love the *Sun*. Now, Pinkie, listen—here's what he says about *you*."

"What?" shouted Pinkie. "Does that man dare—"

"He does. Listen: 'Among the cast appeared Miss Pinkie Lexington, with a German accent on her Lex; a portly person of the oval type. She looked like a turnip and acted the part artistically. Had this succulent vegetable only burst from her scant foliage—but there, who roasts a turnip?' "

"Oh, if he were only here now, where

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I could get my mitts on him," shouted the frantic Pinkie, springing to her feet. "Oh, let me go. I am stifling. Thank heaven, the air outside at least is pure." And Pinkie stormed from the room.

Flossie gazed after the retreating form of her former chum.

"Good exit, that," she observed. "Pinkie really ought to go in for melodrama."

Martha, who had heard enough of the commotion to realize what was going on, entered and congratulated both Flossie and Mr. Zinsheimer.

"Sorry you are leaving this place," volunteered "Marky." "Any—er—money troubles?"

"None whatever, thank you," replied Martha. "I am going to leave the stage and go back to my old home in Indiana."

"Leave the stage?" gasped Flossie.

"If you ever need assistance, you know"—"Marky" coughed confidentially.



"SHE LOOKED LIKE A TURNIP AND ACTED THE PART ARTISTICALLY."



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"Thank you. Good-bye," replied Martha, smiling.

"Marky," pouted Flossie, "I think we'd better be going. Come—you promised to buy me a lot of new things this morning. Hurry up, *angel*."

"Angel?" repeated Zinsheimer. "That's just what I would like to be, but she won't let me. All right, Flossie, I'm coming."

CHAPTER XV

THE FINAL RECKONING

GORDON, too, had spent a restless night. Leaving the theater abruptly after giving orders to dismiss the audience, he had driven furiously to his club. There, in the seclusion of the grill-room and in a niche not far removed from the bar, he had endeavored to alleviate his disappointment by partaking of many gin rickeys. Late at night some of his friends interrupted him at this amusement to tell him of the new play at the Globe.

"New play?" he repeated. "Why, the theater wasn't open."

"Sure it was," replied one of his companions. "But they might as well have kept it closed. Beastly piece, hackneyed

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stuff, stale jokes, bad company, and the star—piffle. Nice enough little girl, you know, very pretty and all that, but she can't act for sour apples."

Gordon listened in surprise. "You mean to say," he demanded, "that Martha Farnum appeared at the Globe to-night?"

"Surest thing you know," his friend replied. "I was there and saw her."

Thereupon Gordon had hunted up Weldon, bitterly assailed him for his treachery, and learned the whole truth of Clayton's interference. The fact that the girl had won out against him worried him. People didn't usually triumph over his bulldog tenacity and obstinate determination. However, when the morning broke, he felt that he must have another interview with the girl. If he had been mistaken in her—if she really had the divine spark, after all, or something in its place which helped her to face that unsympathetic audience the night before—he wanted to discover it, too. Therefore, shortly after Martha had

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finished packing, he was announced, and told to come up.

"I really ought not to see you, Mr. Gordon," said Martha, simply, in a business-like tone. "But there are certain things that must be said before I go away."

"Where are you going?" cried Gordon, in surprise.

"Home—to Indiana."

"I don't believe it," he said hoarsely. "You are going away with that man Clayton."

"That is not true," replied Martha, with heat.

"Well, you ought to feel grateful to him for letting you appear last night, after I had stopped you."

In spite of herself, Martha couldn't resist the inclination to smile, but it was a wan smile.

"I wish he had stopped me, too," she said.

"Oh, do you? And yet you turned from

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me, who can give you everything, to him, who can give you nothing."

"He has given me more than you can ever offer."

"What?"

"The right to a friendship that is good and true. I am glad you came this morning, for we must have a settlement."

"A settlement? How?"

"I to keep what is mine, and to return that which is yours."

"Return what?"

"Every penny you have spent in this mad scheme must be returned to you. I don't know how, or when, but I will work to earn the money and repay every cent. I will not be in your debt."

The telephone bell rang. Martha answered it.

"If you are expecting visitors—" Gordon said.

"It is only Mr. Clayton and I want you to see him," she said.

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"Clayton again, eh? How long have you been friends?"

"I met him the same day I met you, at French Lick. He took an interest in me, in a business way, and loaned me the money I needed to come here and study for the stage. Every dollar of that debt has been repaid long since, but he is still a friend, tried and true, and one who would never have been guilty of your treachery of last night."

Clayton entered jauntily. He seemed somewhat surprised at seeing Gordon.

"Little business council?" he said easily.

"It happens to be something more," explained Martha. "I have pointed out to Mr. Gordon that there must be a final settlement between us."

"Just what I was going to say," replied Clayton, sitting on the arm of the great chair. "You see, Gordon, it is absolutely necessary that Miss Farnum—or some one else on her behalf—should return to you every dollar you have spent on her. As

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for what you actually lost in the starring venture—”

“Oh, I see,” sneered Gordon. “A change of managers?”

“No,” declared Martha. “I have had my chance, and I have failed. To-night the theater will be closed.”

“Well, that’s wise, at any rate,” said Gordon. “So it’s merely a change of angels—with you, Clayton, to pay the bills?”

“Hereafter,” said Clayton, calmly, “it will be my pleasure and my privilege to pay all of Miss Farnum’s bills for life. She has promised to be my wife.”

“What?” cried Martha, in surprise.

“Your wife?” demanded Gordon.

“Precisely,” continued Clayton. “I bid higher than anything you can offer, Gordon. My bid includes a wedding ring.”

Gordon stepped back, looked from Martha to Clayton, and back again to the girl, who stood, confused and embarrassed, with her eyes turned toward the

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floor. Then the innate refinement and the result of years of breeding asserted itself in Gordon's pale face. He stepped forward seriously to Martha.

"Miss Farnum," he said, humbly and sincerely, "better men than *I* have made mistakes. May I wish you every happiness? The same to you, Clayton, with all my heart. Good-bye."

He turned and walked from the room. Not until he had gone did Martha dare to look Clayton squarely in the face.

"I was going to write you this morning," she said, "to tell you that I am going home."

"Without your manager's permission? Not even a two weeks' notice?"

"Do be serious, please," she pleaded. Then with a sudden outburst of passion: "I've failed in everything I ever tried."

"You haven't failed in my eyes," declared Clayton, taking her hand, while she turned away from him. "You have

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merely missed one opportunity you had dreamed of."

"Yesterday I dreamed, but to-day I am awake. I am going home."

Clayton reached over and took her other hand, then swung her around so that she faced him and could not evade his direct glance.

"Didn't I tell Gordon I was going to marry you?" he demanded. "I've run out of all my other fads, and now my latest fad is trying to run away from me."

Martha gazed up at him coquettishly. "You mean you want to marry me just to see what I'll do?" she pouted.

"That's one of the reasons, not to mention loving you," replied Clayton, in a brisk, businesslike tone. "Well?"

Martha paused a moment. "Do you remember," she asked, "once you said the greatest success meant nothing if the right person did not share it with you?"

"Yes."

"You were right. And now I know that

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the greatest failure also means nothing, if the right person *does* share it with you."

Clayton held out his arms entreatingly.

"I think I'm going to like my latest fad immensely," he whispered.

"And I shall try to stick longer than any of the others, even the postage stamps," she answered, as she nestled in his arms.

THE END

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